

'Cultivate the enjoyment of your own company'

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Nonprofit's founder focuses on the welfare of women, helps them cope.

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In 2002, Carolyn Curry founded Women Alone Together, a local nonprofit offering seminars, life lessons and fellowship for women divorced, widowed or solo for any other reason.

Workshops help women in their late 40s and up tackle financial questions as well as learn tips for healthy aging and living life fully.

Curry herself is married to Georgia State football coach Bill Curry. (The couple recently celebrated their 49th wedding anniversary.) Still, the 69-year-old Agnes Scott College alumna, who also holds a doctorate from Georgia State University, said she can often relate to the concerns of older, single women. The AJC recently interviewed her.

Q: How did Women Alone Together get started?

A: I have always been concerned about the wellbeing of women. I had a basic idea of what I wanted to do from my teaching at the University of Kentucky in the mid-'90s when Bill was coaching there.

I saw older women auditing my classes including one class called "Women in Contemporary Society." They were women who wanted to do meaningful things. They wanted to reinvent their lives.

We decided to do substantial seminars in three categories: emotional personal growth, financial and legal issues, and health and wellness issues. All of us women, as we age, face health issues. But a woman who has gone through a divorce or experiences the loss of a spouse, tends not to take care of herself. One point we try to emphasize is the importance for women to take care of themselves. [For more information on the Feb. 11 seminar, "Getting your Financial House in Order," at Agnes Scott College, go to www.womenalonetogether.org.]

Q: How are ways women can do this?

A: One thing that came out of a recent seminar is the need to cultivate the enjoyment of your own company. Don't depend on other women to make you happy. Maybe you want to take a dance class or travel, find a way to make it happen.

Q: How has the group changed over the past 10 years?

A: At first, we used to have seminars that covered emotional personal growth, financial and legal issues and health and wellness issues all at once, and now we only cover only one of those topics at each of the seminars. ... We have a number of people dealing with Alzheimer's. It might be a spouse or a father. It's astounding.

Almost everyone has someone close who has Alzheimer's. We recently had a brain health seminar that included ways of coping with a loved one who might have Alzheimer's but we also addressed ways we can protect our own brain health. But also women wanted an [organized] night out and a reading group, so we combined them. Once a month, we get a private room at a restaurant. We have a social hour, then our meal and then we discuss the book.

We recently had 51 women show up to discuss "The Help," by Kathryn Stockett.



Carolyn Curry says although she is married (to Georgia State football coach Bill Curry), she can still relate to the women her group helps out.

Q: Even though you yourself are married, you have said many of the issues in the group resonate with you. How so?

A: A lot of women can be alone in marriage. And what I mean by that, is my husband has been in the coaching profession and coaching is notorious for long hours. I always said Bill took care of what was important – football – and I took care of everything else. ... It's important to develop your own interests and save a corner of your life for yourself.

You can love your husband and children very much and you give them so much of your time. But it's important to develop a talent or an interest, something you always wanted to do. We've all seen women who give themselves up completely.

Q: What has that interest been for you?

A: Women Alone Together has been my passion and takes up a lot of time. But I have always had a passion for landscaping. I love plants and flowers. We live in a high rise condo in Atlanta, but we have a house in North Carolina and sometimes I go to North Carolina and work in the yard. I love being outside and my hobby is gardening. My house looks like a horticulture exhibit.

Q: How much is Georgia State football a part of your life?

A: I go to all of the home games and some of the out-of-town games. ... Bill is able to inspire, and he really cares. And he is trying to build a good foundation and do it the way it is supposed to be done and not just about the games.

I try to get to know the parents, particularly the mothers. I answer any questions I can about how Bill runs the program. We really try to have a family atmosphere. It ends up with something going on every weekend until signing day in February.

Bill says he's been in football for 50 years, and I have always been at his football games. Our grandsons are starting to play, so here we go again.

We stay very busy doing our separate things but come together to support each other in any way we can.

The Sunday conversation is edited for length and clarity.