

STEPPING OUTSIDE THE MOM ZONE

An audition leads to self-discovery.

By Christine Clapp, DTM

I got my rejection letter via email: “Thank you so much for auditioning. Unfortunately, we have decided not to use your story in the show. I really enjoyed your story—it was well-constructed, funny and had great suspense, but ultimately it did not fit in the show.”

I earned my Distinguished Toastmaster award in 2008. And although I still participate in two clubs, work

The topic certainly called to me, as the imperfect mother of two young children—Finnian, who at the time was 3, and Beatrix, then 5 months. And the notion of auditioning was wonderfully terrifying, as I don’t have a background in theater and have never been part of a show.

So I signed up to audition and rehearsed my story several times a day during the week leading up to tryouts.

It was a fun, informal process. Between speakers, we nibbled on desserts, introduced ourselves and talked about how the experiences we heard rang true to our own. I even met a mother who was a teacher at my son’s school.

When it was my turn, I felt naked onstage—there was no lectern, no conference table, no screen with PowerPoint slides. I stood silent before starting my story because I blanked on my opening line. Then it came. Soon the narrative was flowing; I felt more relaxed and I was enjoying my moment in the spotlight (or rather under the arch).

I was disappointed to learn my story wasn’t selected. Performing on a real stage before a paying audience certainly would have been outside my comfort zone. But I am proud that I auditioned. I learned that I have the courage to stretch myself as a speaker, and I am committed to trying new things in the future, maybe even stepping up to that open mic. I also learned that the rewards of going outside your speaking comfort zone are the people you meet and the stories you hear. **T**

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on projects from the Toastmasters communication and leadership tracks and present regularly for my business, I was feeling a little too comfortable at the lectern. I wanted to step outside my speaking comfort zone. I wanted to again feel the unsettling rush of butterflies in my stomach.

I knew I had found the perfect opportunity when I came across this post in an online forum for neighborhood parents: “*Ever feel like the worst mom in the world? Ever pretend that screaming kid wasn’t yours? We want to hear your story! Audition to be a part of SpeakeasyDC’s Mother’s Day show, ‘Bad Mommy Moments: A Storytelling PlayDate for Moms.’ We’re looking for stories about motherhood failures, surprises, tough decisions, ‘new’ bodies, balancing work and kids and life, losing yourself, finding hope ... and why it’s all worth it.*”

My heart raced as my station wagon crawled through a charming northern Virginia suburb; I squinted to read the street addresses so I wouldn’t miss the home where auditions were being held that evening.

After parking and telling my story one last time to the steering wheel, I left the comfort of my Volkswagen, tiptoed through a dark front yard and stepped into a bright front room where furniture was oriented toward a stage—a small space under an archway that separated the living room from the dining room in a carefully decorated, cozy home.

About a dozen women, including two who were organizing the program for SpeakeasyDC, gathered in the living area and listened as each woman told her story. Some of the stories were scripted, others memorized and a few improvised. Some made me laugh; others made me cry, and my favorites did both.

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