



Media Release

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New recovery support group in Geelong - A gift of hope for those dealing with eating disorders.

Eating Disorders Victoria (EDV) is pleased to announce the inception of a new recovery support group in Geelong. The group, backed by EDV and OneCare Geelong, is an opportunity for eating disorder sufferers who are ready to enter the recovery stage to receive support and understanding.

Nicole Riddle, the driving force behind the group's implementation, accredits her own experience with an eating disorder for inspiring her to create a recovery support group. 'I know that I didn't go through what I went through for no reason - there had to be some good come out of it. Later in my recovery, I discovered EDV's recovery group and went along to prevent relapse. Running a support group is what I saw myself doing and I was inspired to do the same thing in Geelong.'

Nicole believes that the stigma attached to eating disorders prevents many people affected by an eating disorder from seeking the help they so desperately need. She also suggested that people suffering from eating disorders such as bulimia or binge eating disorder experience added difficulty from the common misperception that only people who appear very thin have a problem which requires help, despite the severe health implications of these illnesses.

Regarding her own experience with bulimia, Nicole said, 'For a while, I considered full time care but, compared to someone suffering from anorexia, I looked normal, so I didn't feel worthy of help. There is a stereotypical view that you have to be dangerously thin to have a problem. The illness is so much more than the physical, but that's all that a lot of people see - they don't see the psychological damage.'

Nicole struggled to find the help she needed when she was sick and saw a huge gap in the support system. She had friends being told their eating disorder wasn't severe enough to receive referral for professional help. This was compounded by the high cost of private practice. Nicole hopes that her recovery support group will help to bridge that gap.

'My aim is to help people regain control of what seems like an out of control situation. There is hope, and there is freedom. I want to lead people, just a tiny step, in the right direction,' said Nicole.

There are many ways in which a support group can assist with the recovery process. According to Nicole, 'Participants become stronger from the meetings they attend. The practical skills they learn allow them to take control of their lives again'.

'Participants are provided with an atmosphere of acceptance and are able to meet others who can relate to their journey and struggles. Recovery support groups bring focus and goals into the lives of those affected by eating disorders, and help them to cultivate a respect for self and others. Most importantly, recovery support groups give them hope,' said Nicole.

Geelong's recovery support group is held on the first Monday of each month at 7 pm at 61 Candover Street, Geelong West. The next groups will be held on Monday 2 November, followed by Monday 7 December. Groups will be held once a month, until further notice. There is no charge.

Nicole's journey – 3 key factors in her recovery

1. Admitting she had a problem. 'The recovery process began from the day I admitted that I had a problem,' said Nicole.

2. Professional help. Nicole said, 'I received some therapy from a Geelong psychologist who gave me some skills to overcome and understand the eating disorder.'

3. Support network - family, friends, recovery support group. 'There were times when I tried to say I was better, but my support network knew well enough that I wasn't. There was a sense of accountability,' said Nicole.

Further support and information is available by contacting the Eating Disorders Helpline on 1300 550 236 or www.eatingdisorders.org.au.

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About Eating Disorders Victoria

Eating Disorders Victoria is Victoria's foremost eating disorder charity and the primary source of support, information, community education and advocacy for people with eating disorders and their families in Victoria.

Support services are free and confidential and include the **Eating Disorders Helpline 1300 550 236**, on-line Chat Room and Message Board, confidential support groups and education programs. www.eatingdisorders.org.au