

Ann's Recovery from Bulimia

It's always inspiring to hear stories from other people suffering from bulimia – inspiring primarily because they come from people who have been living a secret and painful life, and it takes extreme courage to become outspoken about the pain. I think the most important step towards overcoming an eating disorder is being aware that recovery is possible. Take it from me, I struggled with it for over six years and can confidently say that I have recovered.

My story is not so different from others. I was 18 when my bulimia developed, and the primary reason for its development was a feeling of lack of control. Bulimia was my coping mechanism for the stresses of university study and personal relationships, and the hang-ups I had about my body. I had grown up as an overweight child, the weight dropped off, without dieting, when I was 16, and the fear of putting the weight back on compelled me to obsess. During my time with bulimia I was an average size, and now that I am recovered, I am still an average size, but now I'm proud of it (there's nothing more attractive than a woman with lovely curves – wait a sec, a *happy* woman with lovely curves is even better).

The first stage of my recovery was my own recognition of the problem, and then having the courage to tell my family and friends. I did not want to suffer alone any more, and, mostly, I wanted those I loved to understand what I was experiencing. I was met with mixtures of confusion, grief, ignorance and real compassion. Eating disorders are not well understood, and part of my recovery meant holding the hands of those around me – letting them know what I was feeling and why, and that I was not simply experiencing an obsessive diet. This, in turn, led to increased understanding from my family and friends and eventually, I understood myself.

The initial phases were certainly not easy. I read many self-help books, went to several counselors; I went through most of the avenues which work to help sufferers. Many times I felt like it was too difficult a struggle, that I was still spiraling and would always be a bulimic, but gradually the compulsion to binge and purge was decreasing. Eventually I could not stand to watch myself hurt myself so inexplicably – I realised it's much easier to be happy.

It's a cliché, but time was my biggest asset. Time, coupled with self-belief and strength, has allowed me to reach the stage I am now at. I absolutely love food and eating, but am now able to move outside my comfort zones with food – and it's so much more pleasurable.

If you're in the middle of your struggle with an eating disorder, never be too hard on yourself. Talk about it with someone who'll listen and will support you, write your thoughts down, realise that, with time and patience, recovery is possible. And, when you get there, let everyone know about it because everyone wants to cheer (and share a piece of cake) with you.