

# Struggling with an Eating Disorder

by Pearl in Texas

I am a 25-year-old suffering from anorexia nervosa. I cannot begin to express what it is like to live with an eating disorder. Words could never fully describe the fear, hatred, and overwhelming sadness that I awake with every single morning. The truth is I wake up each day fearing that today may be my last day.

According to my doctor, I am alive today only "by the grace of God." Sometimes I feel I'm not living, that I'm not really alive, I know that I'm dying, and that everyday this eating disorder continues to slowly kill me. I just want it to stop. I feel like I am trapped in a living hell and I want out. I just want to be normal again and it angers me that very few people understand that.

I did not ask for this. I did not choose to be driven by self-hate or insecurity nor did I wake up one morning and say to myself, "Today I'm going to starve myself and become anorexic." I do not enjoy torturing myself every day. I wouldn't wish my physical or emotional pain on my worst enemy. If I could, I would take the suffering from others fighting this disease and make it mine.

Sadly, society tends to attach a stigma to those afflicted with eating disorders. We are seen as greedy, selfish, ignorant girls who would do anything to be thin. It is then that most people turn their backs and say, "You know what is wrong with you. You know that this lifestyle is killing you. You don't want to be normal, you just want attention. Why should we waste our time on someone who is voluntarily killing herself slowly - even when there is help at hand?"

I am writing this with hope of helping another person who is struggling with an eating disorder. I also hope that by reading this that the importance of awareness and prevention of eating disorders, as well as the need for medical treatment for those who are already affected, becomes evident. It's important that people understand that eating disorders are unique reactions to a variety of external and internal conflicts such as stress, anxiety, unhappiness and feeling like life is out of control.

Eating disorders have absolutely nothing to do with physical appearance; there is no correlation between eating disorders and the desire to be thin. That is actually the least of our worries. The emptiness in our hearts gradually gives way to the emptiness in our stomachs.

I also hope that by reading this, each person can at least take away an understanding that what we - anorexics, bulimics, - have no control over this disease. We spend our lives struggling and striving for control and perfection. We even lie to ourselves and say that we are in complete control. But we are not. As an anorexic, that is the hardest, but most important thing I have ever admitted - more than emotional anguish. What the mind cannot handle, the body will dutifully bear. Running on empty, bone where flesh once was, always dizzy, always tired, and still it was easier than facing our emotions.

My story about the struggles of living with an eating disorder is only one of many. Even though I thank God everyday for sparing my life and giving me another chance, I realize I am far from claiming complete freedom from the grip of anorexia nervosa. The ugly truth is that the scope and severity of eating disorders is misunderstood and

ignored. Professional medical assistance for those of us living with an eating disorder is rare.

Even though this disease has proven lethal, society needs to realize that it is in fact treatable. Nobody has to die, yet tragedy strikes everyday as the world sits back and condones the act of self-destruction.