

Dear Readers

I'm a young female who found out about Eating Disorders 2 years ago and today I'd like to tell my story of Anorexia and give a message to sufferers of Eating Disorders and to a special person in my life.

Firstly, I'd like to explain how I'm feeling. We all know that you need plenty of sleep and rest in order for your body to function properly. Well, unfortunately I can't remember the last time that I had a good nights sleep so therefore at work I'm always feeling very tired and weak. I sometimes feel very faint when people talk to me about food and I very occasionally get butterflies in my stomach. I've realised that I've got very pale skin and dark circles under my eyes. I'm always feeling cold, which is really embarrassing when the sun's out shining. I'm losing a lot of weight, which is not what my body needs! I've come to the conclusion that I eat according to my mood. I hate my friends and family seeing me like this so sometimes I shut myself from the outside world and isolate myself from the people that really care about me.

I used to be quite an active person. I loved playing sports - badminton, tennis, rounders, cross country and even rugby. You name it. I was always really energetic but recently all of that has changed and not because I've wanted it to but because I haven't got the energy to be so active and enjoy the things that I used to. I find it very difficult to get out of bed sometimes. You can just imagine feeling so weak in the morning and then having to come to work. Life's never been so difficult and unfair.

I don't want to explain too much about what I'm feeling and experiencing as people have different symptoms but I hope anyone who can relate to how I'm feeling, goes on and reads my story.

It all began two years ago when I met Jay, who unfortunately had someone in his life who suffered from an Eating Disorder. Jay and I were work colleagues and as time went on we became very close friends. It was Jay who told me about Eating Disorders and thought that I was suffering from Anorexia and this is how my story of living with Anorexia begins.

Having found out that my friend thought I was suffering from Anorexia I felt quite hurt but as time went on and my behaviour changed I began to question whether Jay was right - could I be suffering from Anorexia? I denied having eating problems for quite a while but something inside told me that Jay could be right.

Jay had a lot of knowledge about Eating Disorders because of his past experience. He really urged me to see my GP, which took a lot of courage but unfortunately, this didn't help me in anyway to establish what was causing my unusual behaviour and why I was feeling like I was. However, going to the GP helped me to become stronger and fight for my body, health and strength!

Having not been successful with the GP, I knew I had to use my own initiative and do some research into Anorexia. Jay introduced me to the Eating Disorders Associations website, they are also known as EDA and have now changed their name to Beat. At this point I was feeling very low and asking myself why I had become the person that I was. I really needed some answers. Having had a look at the site, Jay advised me to email the organisation and explain to them how I was feeling and what I was experiencing. I waited anxiously for a few days for a reply.

I was lucky to have had Jay in my life while all this was going on. He really stood by me even when I pushed him away. He helped me to realise that my eating patterns were a problem and what I was feeling was not my fault. As time went on my behaviour became unbearable. I really got to the stage where I felt that I was being so controlled that I couldn't go on finding out about Anorexia. Every time I made a positive step I felt like I walked into a brick wall that pushed me to the ground so hard I found it difficult to get back up again and fight for myself. Having Jay's support made me stronger and also closer to him. If it wasn't for Jay I really don't know where I'd be right now.

Things got worse before they got better! During working hours I was always so busy that I'd forget all about taking a break and relaxing for a few moments. At this point I started to receive comments from colleagues such as 'your waste away if you don't eat anything' or 'God, anyone would think that you were on a diet'. I even had a colleague buy me chocolate. How could I explain to them that I wanted to eat but something was holding me back?

Jay realised that things had become very difficult for me and he really urged me to see my GP again, which I did but this didn't work for me. He knew I needed professional help and support! I done some research into this and found a local organisation who supports people suffering from Eating Disorders. I plucked up the courage to contact this organisation and arrange an appointment. I almost felt a bit guilty for arranging this appointment, as I knew it was not what my Anorexia wanted me to do. If it wasn't for Jay's encouragement and support, I think I would have cancelled my appointment.

I remember after my appointment on my way back to work I couldn't believe the experience that I had put Jay through. I felt so ashamed, disappointed and angry with myself! I remember I hardly ate anything for a couple of days and I also started to behave very differently with Jay. I started to ignore him more and not spend as much time with him. I'm not sure what caused me to behave like this. I guess it was my Anorexia punishing me for getting help or I was feeling hurt? I always said to him that I felt like Anorexia was living inside of me telling me what to do, what to eat and how to behave with others. I don't really think anyone can understand how that feels unless you're suffering from an Eating Disorder.

Having come back from my appointment I [gave up](#) any hope that I had of beating my Eating Disorder. Work at this point was very stressful that I started to smoke for a while. This is very unusual for me! I don't actually know what caused me to smoke but I think my health was so damaged at this point anyway, that I didn't think smoking could do much worse. My work colleagues were surprised to see me smoke and so stressed! This wasn't really a habit I wanted in the first place but then life seems to be full of surprises!

I could tell Eating Disorders was something that Jay felt quite strongly about. Despite the way that I behaved towards him and the terrible experience that I put him through he always knew how to put a smile on my face, which I really adored about him and was something that I needed. Jay always right from the start when he told me about Eating Disorders would sit and talk to me about how I was feeling etc. He never once turned his back on me. Jay continued to encourage me to keep in contact with the local organisation and beat and to quit smoking! So for a while I kept in touch with these organisations by phone and email, which really

helped me to establish a few things. I also took on board Jay's advice and quit smoking.

As time ticked away things got worse for me. I wanted a way out so I began working for another organisation. This wasn't really what I wanted deep down inside. It was more what my parents thought was right for me. I wanted to lose my Anorexia side but instead I ended up leaving people that I really cared about. Anyway, once I started my new job things were tougher than ever! I didn't have Jay around to support me, my job was a lot more hectic than I thought it would be and I was around complete different people who thought a lot of me. At the back of my mind I knew I had a lot to prove, not to myself but to my colleagues and my family.

Anyone suffering from Anorexia will realise that relationships become very difficult. I've realised when mum talks to me about food, I go really quiet and just walk out the room. She very oftently asks to why I'm never hungry! (If only I had the answer!) I know my behaviour has changed and this is not something that I like.

I don't like going out food/cloth shopping because nothing fits or takes my fancy! I'm losing weight, which is making me feel even weaker and also my hands have become very weak that I struggle to hold a glass of water sometimes. My hair seems to fall out quite a lot, which is really worrying. I've always got stomach pain and I've had a lot of abdominal pain too. I've had a lot of stressful days when I'm running around preparing food for everyone else that I'm forgetting to look after myself. My friends have seen a real change in me - they think I don't know how to relax, which I hate to admit but I don't know what relaxing means anymore. It's always work, work and more work. My point being is that I don't like the person my Anorexia has made me!

Some of my friends think that I'm addicted to working, which may be true but I get a feeling it's more than that, like people have got expectations of me and I don't want to let them down. I'm the sort of person who's always done what my parents have wanted me to do. I used to get called 'Daddy's little soldier', when I was a little kid. Never doing anything wrong, always looking after others and just getting on with whatever life threw at me.

There comes a point when your Anorexia really pushes you to the edge. You don't know whom to turn to for advice and things are even more difficult if you keep your feelings to yourself and don't open up to others. At work I felt really alone and like I was wasting away. I knew I had to find out more about my feelings I attended a conference and met some really nice people and understood Anorexia a bit more. I even managed to get answers to why I was having panic attacks and what caused them. Going to the conference was over whelming! Although, I haven't been diagnosed as Anorexic, having been to this conference a few things became very clear!

Having attended the conference I had a bit more faith in myself to get rid of my Anorexia. So I decided to go against eating healthily and decided to treat myself to some chocolate, which like anyone I loved. However, my Anorexia wasn't too keen on chocolate! If I can't even eat a bar of chocolate what hope did I have in beating Anorexia?

Like any human being everyone has good and bad days but when suffering from Anorexia you tend to have a lot of bad days than good days. If anyone has read and understood my story, you will have learnt that Anorexia is an illness and needs to be dealt with sooner rather than later! I hate to worry anyone but the consequences of not beating your eating disorder are severe. It really is a race against time!!!

I'd like to finish my story by thanking my local organisation and Beat for all of their help and support. The work these organisations do really helps people like myself in overcoming Eating Disorders and seeing light at the end of a very dark tunnel!

I wanted to achieve something out of writing my story about Anorexia and that was to encourage sufferers to be honest with themselves and realise that they have eating problems. It is difficult admitting that you have a problem and it's only human to feel like this! As you all know I was lucky to have Jay in my life who pointed out my eating problems. He got me to open up to him, which I've never done with anyone so please if you can find someone who you can talk to then open up to that person. It does help to have someone who you can talk to about your worries and someone who will support you through the tough times. We sometimes take friends for granted - when they are around to help you, you push them away and when you need them, there elsewhere.

My friend Jay really urged me to get support and help and today I'm urging everyone who's read my story and knows exactly what I'm going through to get help as soon as possible before things get out of hand. Anorexia drives you to the end sometimes where you begin to ask if your life is really worth it and the answer to that is YES! I really don't want people to end up with things so badly that you can't see a way of getting rid of your Eating Disorder. It's difficult to think positively when you're experiencing so many changes in yourself that you don't necessarily want but at the end of the day you need to ask yourself am I going to run or fight? I hope the answer to that is FIGHT!

If you want to get help but don't know where to go then please have a look at the beat's website, which is www.b-eat.co.uk. There's a message board where sufferers of Eating Disorders post messages to one another to provide support and advise. You can also order books from the website and research the organisations that are out there wanting to support people with Eating Disorders. Please remember that you're not alone - there are people out there who know what you are experiencing.

Last of all, for those of you who have not already guessed, Jay was the special person in my life who has helped me tremendously by introducing me to the beat's website, ordering me Eating Disorders leaflets, sticking by me so much and for having the courage to speak to me about my eating problems. I hope everyone's as lucky as I am to have someone they can confide in.