



# Sock it to eating disorders

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## Testimonial

I was 14 years old when anorexia took over my life. It was like my prison guard. It was always there watching the calories, my portions, my reflection in the mirror. It made me exercise morning and night. Woe betides me if I hadn't lost weight that morning.

Anorexia does not arrive overnight. It gradually creeps into your life. It "only wants" to help you make healthier choices and become perfect, even though perfection doesn't exist. When you see two, three or four pounds less on the scale, when people compliment you on all sides... that's the best feeling you can get.

Then you start trying to get that feeling back, those compliments. That's when anorexia is no longer creeping into your life: it grabs you by the throat, you're trapped and there's no way out. Goodbye friends, goodbye relationships. Now there's nothing more important than that feeling of euphoria every time you lose another ounce. But it's not only ounces you're losing: it's your personality, your enjoyment of life, your relationships.

Oh well, that's the price you pay for a perfect body. At least that's what you think. Then, when anorexia is firmly anchored in you, when it has metastasized everywhere, the feeling of ecstasy disappears and the descent into hell begins. You've always been a model student or an exemplary athlete; now you're no longer able to concentrate or perform. Your body is just trying to protect itself until the next meal. The cold takes hold of you, despite the sweet warmth of Indian summer. Hairs called lanugo start growing to keep you warm. It's getting harder and harder to get out of bed in the morning, your head feels too heavy for your frail body. You try to hide under layers of clothing, but everyone can see that you're not well. Everyone but you: you still think you're in control.

Then one day, you pass out at school, because going up the stairs has exhausted your last reserves of energy. You end up in the hospital. The doctors try to make you understand that you're unwell, but you still believe you're in control. This is where you arrive at the crossroads. Are you going to stay in the grip of anorexia or are you going to fight it? Trust me, it's not an easy choice. Even when you try with all your might, the prison guard will scream at you with every bite you take.

You have to ignore that voice. You need to keep talking to your doctors and other care providers. You might relapse, and that's perfectly normal. Your team, your safety net, will always be there to help you get back up. This will be the most grueling fight of your life, but I have faith that you can win. After six years in the prison of anorexia, I'm free—unconditional discharge!

Take care of yourself,

-Julie

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