

## Diary of an Anorexic (Part 2 of 2)

BY CLARE FITZGERALD | April 19, 2014

**In case you haven't read it yet, Part One can be found [here](#).**

### **Beginning Recovery:**

I keep having a battle with my mind. My rational side keeps telling me that I've made the right choice by choosing recovery, but my irrational one keeps telling me I made a mistake and I'm not actually sick – that all these people are making it up. But really, why would I have been sent to an inpatient program if I wasn't sick? Yes, that's right, I'm officially living in the hospital. I was originally put on another floor because my heart rate was dangerously low and I was severely dehydrated. I spent a month up there with an IV in my arm. They tried to feed me, but let's be honest, I barely ate. I'd wait until the nurse left and then throw the food out, careful to hide it under other garbage.

I've been in the inpatient program for about two weeks. I'm away from my family and I don't know what's worse: being fed food that terrifies me or being away from them. I know we're still in the same city, but I barely see them. They're only able to visit on weekends due to their schedules, which sucks. They make sure to call daily, yet it isn't the same as them physically being here. The first week or so has been the most brutal. I literally cried to my mum every night on the phone and I was tempted to just walk out. I never thought I'd get as homesick as I am, but I guess I'm just full of surprises. I've even found myself crying myself to sleep, waking up with puffy, red eyes. I've brought up my homesickness to the doctor, but he said that being here will be my best chance at recovery. So I'm going to try to stay here for as long as they say to.

I haven't even begun to mention the food. They're feeding me so much that I feel like I'm going to explode after each meal! I eat five times a day, three meals and two snacks, and each feels like I'm eating a full day's feast. My stomach can't handle the amount! And they're making me eat food I wouldn't dare touch in a million years: chocolate, ice cream, chips, candy, white bread and pasta. My anxiety spikes every time a fear food is placed in front of me and I feel like bursting out in tears right there at the table, in front of the other patients. I guess I should mention that there are other girls in this program: three inpatients and about ten outpatients.

The therapists and doctors have also been holding groups. They mainly deal with the therapy side of recovery, like cognitive behavioural therapy and dialectical behaviour therapy, but there are also nutrition and goal groups. Currently, I'm not getting much out of them. My concentration is near zero, so I usually zone out after five minutes. I've been told it will return with re-feeding, but I find that hard to believe. I mean, writing this entry is difficult. I keep having to re-focus myself and re-read what I've already wrote.

If I'm being honest with myself, all I really want is to go home. I don't want to gain weight and become a whale. How am I supposed to know these people won't make me obese instead of a proper, healthy weight? I know I need to be here, but with each passing

day the urge to run out and go back home strengthens. I just want this all to go away.

### **Few Months Into Recovery:**

It's been four months since I started my recovery and I honestly can't believe how good I'm feeling! I left the inpatient program last month pretty much a new person! While I was anxious to leave the 24/7 support, I was beyond excited to be able to go home and continue my recovery with the knowledge I'd be returning home to my family each night.

I've learnt a lot during the past few months. The big thing they said is that me having anorexia isn't my fault. It was hard-wired in my brain and I couldn't really do anything about it. It appeared when it did because I was stressed and that's how I coped with the stress. It takes a load off my shoulders knowing that because I've been really hard on myself for becoming anorexic, but I'm still angry that I let it go on as long as it did. I had it for four years and I had ample opportunity to let someone know. But I'd always psych myself out and not do it. While I've learnt to let a lot of things go, that one still grips me.

The therapy groups have been a real lifesaver. Since my concentration is starting to return, I've been able to pay attention and actually take in information. I've learnt how to deal with urges and how to deal with my other issues, like low self-esteem and my inability to be assertive most of the time. I feel like I'm becoming a whole new person, a revamped version of myself, and I'm beyond excited!

My anxiety around eating, and food in general, has decreased. I've been working on fear foods and can now eat the likes of ice cream and chocolate with minimal anxiety. Sure, there are still some foods that scare me (chips and soda), but I've made great headway and I'm proud of myself. I could never have imagined five-six months ago that I'd be eating food that once terrified me. But here I

I know I'm repeating myself, but I'm still amazed at how good I'm feeling! It's incredible how different I feel from the time I started treatment. I can think clearly, I can read without being easily distracted, and I've gained my interests back. I'm not a walking zombie and I make each day something to write about. And people are telling me that I'm looking better! At first, I took offence to comments like that because it meant I'd gained weight and was fat. But as I moved through recovery, I began to put less emphasis on the numbers and accepted the comments for what they were: solid proof that I was getting better. I still care a bit about the numbers on the scale – I don't think I'll ever not care about them – but they're not defining what I do or who I am, and I'm incredibly excited about that!

### **Two Months After Treatment:**

Two months since I left treatment. Two months since I stepped out into the world to handle this by myself. I'll admit, I was happy when I left. It had been an incredibly hard couple of months, but the result is I'm feeling the best I've felt in years. I never thought I'd feel this happy or hopeful again, but here I am. Although there was a part of me that was worried, a part that said I wasn't ready to leave. I know it was just my eating disorder telling me that I wouldn't be able to continue recovery by myself, but the thoughts still

weighed heavily on my mind.

I think what caused the doubts was what the treatment team told me a week before I left. They told me that my recovery wasn't going to be complete and that I was going to face a true trial the minute I left: the first six months. They said that those who were going to relapse would most likely do so within that time-frame and that I was going to have to be very vigilant. I knew that I would be careful, but the thought I would slip terrified me. I didn't want to return to the way I was a few months ago. I couldn't...

However, so far, everything seems to be going well for me. I've found a new job at the local movie theatre and I've reapplied for university next year. I've found myself being excited for my future and that's the first time in a while. I've had a few urges since I left, some stronger than others, but I haven't given in to any of them. In fact, I've made myself eat what I used to consider a fear food, just to show my eating disorder who's boss. I didn't give in, I didn't do anything that would put my recovery in jeopardy. I showed myself that I'm strong and that I need to give myself more credit. I'm proud of myself and I'm not going to waste this second chance I've been given.

I'm happy where I am. I'm happy at what I've accomplished. I'm not going to let this eating disorder control me any longer. I can think clearly and positively again. Sure, I'm not as thin as I used to be, but who cares?! I'm happy and healthy, so what does it matter if I'm not a size zero. I'm not the number on the scale, nor the number on my jeans. I'm myself; a happy and thriving young woman. I'm proud of who I am and am learning to accept this new body. Sure, I have some bad days, but who doesn't? All that matters is that I create enough good days to overcome the bad ones. I'm a new person and I'm going to make my mark on this earth. I'm no longer my eating disorder and I hope to never be again.

Writer's Note: As I'm sure you've noticed, I haven't made a section entitled "Six Months After Treatment". The reason for this is because I have yet to reach that time. I am currently within the first six months of post-anorexia treatment and I felt I couldn't rightfully post an "after" if I hadn't reached it myself.

I hope this opened your eyes to the reality of eating disorders and, if you're suffering from one, showed you that recovery is possible. If you are currently suffering from an eating disorder, please contact your GP or tell someone you trust. I know it feels like you'll never be able to escape it, but I promise you that it's possible. I am an example of life after an eating disorder and I'm the happiest I've been in a long time.