

You Are Not Alone

Monthly Recovery **Support Letter**

Filled with eating disorder recovery stories, exclusive guest interviews, inspirations, recovery and body image tips, poems, artwork, healing information and more.

February 2011 Edition



**“Please stay strong and keep on believing in yourself!
I know how you feel, I have been there!
You CAN recover!”**

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Trigger Warning: Please note that the content in this newsletter may trouble some people.
If you feel you may react negatively to the content, please don't continue reading.

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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

February was “Eating Disorders Awareness Week” and lots of wonderful events took place to raise awareness about these so much misunderstood disorders, and to show others struggling that they are not alone and encouraging them to reach out for help. Always remember: Recovery really is possible and eating disorders can be overcome!



Hope something took place in your community as well!

And I have some exciting news – the Support Letter has a proofreader now! Yay! ☺ Welcome onboard Holly Orr -- and thank you SO much for your time!

February was a crazy busy but also wonderful month for me... time just flew by. So I'll be taking it easy for a few days and catching up with my emails, before heading to Arizona on the weekend to be a part of iaedp's (The International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals) conference in Phoenix.

Enjoy this edition of the Support Letter. Thanks to all the contributors for making it happen!

All the best and take good care of yourself!

Andrea

Congratulations.... The winner of last month's “No Numbers” giveaway is Kimberly from Canada.

PS. If you'd like to share your poetry, artwork, story, and recovery tips with the Support Letter community email me at andrea@youarenotalonebook.com - I am looking forward to hearing from you! ☺

PPS. If you'd like me to visit your school, treatment center, support group, special event, to talk about eating disorders, how to develop a healthy body image and share my personal recovery story, send a message to speaking@youarenotalonebook.com – for more information and to read **what others are saying about my presentations**, visit www.youarenotalonebook.com/speaking.php - I am looking forward to meeting you in person! ☺



You can also connect with me through **Facebook**
and my **recovery blog** at <http://andrearoe.blogspot.com>

Inspirational Quotes:

Words to help you on your journey.

“Instead of giving myself reasons why I can't, I give myself reasons why I can.”

– *Author Unknown*

**“The future is not something we enter.
The future is something we create.”**

– *Leonard I. Sweet*

“I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it.”

– *Pablo Picasso*

“Happiness is not by chance, but by choice.”

– *Jim Rohn*

“If you don't like something change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it.”

– *Mary Engelbreit*

**“To be a great champion you must believe you are the best.
If you're not, pretend you are.”**

– *Muhammad Ali*

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”

– *Theodore Roosevelt*

**“True friendship is like sound health;
the value of it is seldom known until it be lost.”**

– *Charles Caleb Colton*

“Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead. The consciousness of loving and being loved brings a warmth and richness to life that nothing else can bring.”

– *Oscar Wilde*

**“Each of us feels that we are just a drop in the ocean,
but the ocean would be less without that missing drop.”**

– *Mother Teresa*

“The first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: Decide what you want.”

– *Ben Stein*

“I've never seen a smiling face that was not beautiful.”

– *Author Unknown*

“Be a first rate version of yourself, not a second rate version of someone else.”

– *Judy Garland*

**“We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.”**

– *Aristotle*

Inspiring Woman – Making a Difference in the World



Nicole Roberge

This month, I have the pleasure of introducing you to writer and author Nicole Roberge, who'll share her own experiences with eating disorders and recovery, and what she is doing now to make a difference and support others in their journey.

*Thanks so much, Nicole, for your time
and for sharing your story with us! ☺*

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I am 28, I'm a writer and I live in Connecticut. I love writing so I do it for both my job, as a freelance journalist, and creatively. I have been published in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *ELLEgirl*, the *Hartford Courant*, *CBS*, *Script Magazine*, *New England Film*, *Songwriter Universe*, *Hear/Say* and *JVibe*, as well as a book contributor to the inspirational journal, *Recovering the Soul*.

I am currently pursuing my Master's in Creative Writing where I work on full-length publishable pieces and with a degree, will be able to teach creative writing at the college level.

With my creative writing, I am working on a mystery novel right now, as well as another memoir—a follow up to *Hang in There, Wherever "There" Is*.

I love music, which is something I write a lot about, doing reviews of albums and interviews with musicians, which can be really cool and a lot of fun. I get really inspired by musicians who write and play their own music. I'm big into lyrics and song meanings and get inspired that way also.

My family has two goofy and adorable English Bulldogs named Boomer and Molly and I hope to get my own one day too. I have a wonderful family who has been so supportive through everything, such as my eating disorder and recovery—my parents, older sister, and younger brother. They were an incredible, amazing part of my journey and continue to be.

When and how did your struggles with eating disorders begin?

Growing up I had been overweight and it was something that was very hard for me. Like I said, I have an amazing family and got along with everyone at school, but my weight always brought me down. I was active—played tennis and did track in high school—but I was just one of those people who was a certain weight and it bothered me that I could never lose it. Certain kids pointed it out too, which was hard and upsetting. I was very sensitive.

I always had, I think, the eating disorder in me—it was just never completely "active." In high school, I would skip lunches and take diet pills to try to deal with my weight. In college, I tried skipping meals again, but that is when I first purged. I can't say I was ever truly bulimic—I never binged and purged, but I found myself purging after some meals when I was trying to lose weight. After college, I returned home to Connecticut (I went to school in New Hampshire) for a year, and tried losing weight the healthy way and working out, but unfortunately, continued to purge secretly.

A year later, I decided to go out to Los Angeles to do a summer-long screenwriting program. I was very excited about this new venture and packed up my car, knowing no one out there, and drove cross country. After the summer, I decided to enroll in their 9-month program. I missed my family, but saw this as a great opportunity to explore my writing further.

Three months later, I returned home to Connecticut for the holidays and I found that everyone commented me on my weight loss. "What *weight loss*?" I thought. I realized that living on my own and not being the best cook, I guess, and also doing some yoga occasionally, I lost some weight, but didn't notice. After people hadn't seen me for a while, they did and I got positive reactions.

When I returned to L.A. after the New Year, I thought to myself: "If I can lose weight without doing anything, what would happen if I joined a gym?" And so it began. **It started as a simple diet and exercise routine, and it soon took over my life.** I became obsessed. I watched what I ate and became addicted to exercise—damaging my mind and body. I was isolated and depressed, missing my family so much and feeling lost in L.A. When I couldn't cope with these feelings, I dealt with it instead by going to the gym. And it destroyed me.

Soon, it was six months later. The screenwriting course was over and I made the big decision to stay in L.A. and see what I could do with my scripts. I returned back to Connecticut for a visit home for my little brother's high school graduation and to spend some time with family. People saw a new Nicole. I wasn't at my worst yet, I just had lost a lot of weight. But people saw it as positive, and thought I looked great. I was thinner, not unhealthily, but my mind was. So I heard comments about my great weight loss, and my eating-disordered mind said, "You're not there yet, Nicole. You have more to lose." I had so much more to lose—I had everything to lose.

Two weeks later, I returned to L.A. and went into turbo-mode, afraid I had gained weight at home. **The eating disorder had completely taken over my mind at that point.** I didn't have the screenwriting course anymore to keep me busy. Just free time, so **my full-time job became the eating disorder.** Anorexia was my life.

A couple more months went by, and the apartment I was subletting was up. I was so depressed at this point and scared about what was happening in my life, but would not admit I had an eating disorder. I wanted to go home, but did not want to feel like I was a failure in L.A. A woman I knew from the first screenwriting course offered to let me live with her while I made up my mind.

This is truly when things went downhill. I was afraid to have someone "watching" me. So I restricted more and worked out more. This is when the **health problems** began—the chest pains, the dizziness. After a week of moving in with her, I was in the hospital with such horrible chest pains. The nurse was about to do bloodwork when the doctor came in and told him to stop. "She doesn't have heart problems," he said. "She's in great shape. Look at her low heart rate." I cringe now just remembering that. My low heart rate wasn't just because I worked out. It was because I was anorexic and malnourished. He said, "She is too young to have heart problems." He diagnosed me with costo-chondritis, an inflammation of the chest wall. He said I'd be in pain for about a month, but to take a few days off and I could still work out. So I listened.

I'd been working out, with awful chest pains, just hoping I could make it through. Finally, I got really scared and saw my regular doctor. He couldn't believe my weight loss, as I hadn't seen him in a while. He told me not to lose much more. Then he said he didn't agree with the first doctor and told me I had anxiety. I knew it wasn't anxiety. I was truly scared for my health but **would not admit I had an eating disorder.** However, I would go on Google and look up "anorexia" and "chest pains." The result scared me. It said, "number one cause of death: cardiac arrest."

I knew what I was doing was not right, but I couldn't stop. The eating disorder manipulated me. I wanted help but was too afraid to ask for it. I couldn't give up my eating disorder. I still wanted to lose more weight, even though I knew it was bad.

How did you get started in your recovery?

My friends in Boston knew I was having a tough time and that I was a little depressed, so as an early birthday present, flew me to Boston and said we would go back to our college for alumni weekend. I thought maybe I could confide in them about my "issue." They saw me and did not see their friend, Nicole. I was someone else, and they confronted me. But the words they used were not comforting. They said I looked like a skeleton and told me I was going to die if I didn't do something about my eating disorder, which I assured them I did not have. My best friend said she couldn't stand to look at me. I was hurt, so instead of seeking help, I withdrew. I left Boston defeated, and returned to Los Angeles more depressed and deeper into my eating disorder.

Days later, I was at work, and everything, my world, slowed down. My heart was racing and I couldn't move, couldn't speak. Before I passed out, people came to my aid. They told me to call my doctor right away, which I did, and they told me to come right in. I told my doctor what happened and how the chest pains were still there and hadn't stopped. He became angry with me, told me that nothing was wrong with my heart and I merely had anxiety. He said they could do a stress test and went to leave the office. I stopped him. I said, "There's something else. I have a problem. I think I work out too much and don't eat enough." I couldn't say the word, "anorexia" or "eating disorder." He said, "I think I knew this." I was expecting and wanted help. I was ready for some kind of treatment or "cure." What he said, however, was, "you need to start eating more and exercise less." He literally wrote that down for me. Again, I felt defeated. Easier said than done.

Later that day, I felt dizzy again and the chest pains returned. Suddenly, my heart started racing so hard I thought it would beat out of my chest. My blood burned down my arm. I screamed for my roommate. I told her it was my heart and she called 911. I can't explain how truly terrifying that moment was. My heart was beating so fast that my roommate couldn't tell the 911 operator how many beats there were, she couldn't keep up to count them. I literally thought I had seconds to live and I thought to myself, "I am never going to see my family again." I thought it was over, and I thought, "What have I done to myself?" I thought I was dead, but I lived. I almost didn't.

The ambulance showed up and started checking me out, however, they also checked out my medication. Since my doctor thought I had anxiety, he prescribed anxiety medication. I was not taking it, but the EMT's saw it and



thought, "Anxiety," and told me I was having an anxiety attack. I told them I wasn't. They called the hospital and said they were bringing in a female having an anxiety attack. Again, I told them that wasn't it. But I wasn't able to tell them about the eating disorder.

When I got to the hospital, they left me on the stretcher in the hall for an hour, ignored. When I got into the room, I waited for another hour, dizzy, sick, my heart aching. There was no one to call for to help me when it got worse. When the doctor came in, she looked disgusted by me. She didn't listen to my complaints. She told me I was having an anxiety attack, even though I told her I strongly believed that was not it. I reiterated all of my symptoms and she left the room. Later, a nurse returned and told me I was being discharged. I was in shock. I said, "But I don't feel well, I am having chest pains." She left and the doctor came back. She wrote me a prescription for anti-anxiety medication and that was it.

I was in terrible distress, emotionally and physically. She didn't ask any proper questions. I may not have been able to tell her about my eating disorder, but she should have been able to recognize the signs and symptoms, and if not, asked the appropriate questions that could have led to a diagnosis in this case. I so strongly believe that many medical professionals are lacking the knowledge about eating disorders and how to treat them.

This was just my first experience with poor medical treatment and my eating disorder. Today, I am trying to do my part to help educate medical professionals about this disease.

That night, again, I left, defeated. And my roommate picked me up, I think, feeling a bit the same. She told me they should have had me on IVs and a feeding tube, then, specifically, "I know you don't want to hear this, but I think you're anorexic." Finally, I replied, "I know."

I admitted it. I knew I had the disorder, but then, I first admitted it. And I said to her, "If the doctors aren't going to help me with this, I am going to do it on my own." But as much as I tried, I needed others' support to recover. **I told my family and they were so amazing and supportive.** I stayed in L.A. for about a month after that night, with continuous poor medical treatment, though I worked hard on my increasing my diet and decreasing my negative exercise habits. I then knew that I needed my family's support and I returned home to Connecticut, hoping I could do treatment outpatient.

Being back home with my family made a tremendous difference, and I gained weight, but that horrible eating disorder voice was still there constantly in my head telling me what to do—and I couldn't tell *it* "no." I did an assessment with The Renfrew Center, expecting to do outpatient treatment at their center in Connecticut, but they strongly recommended that I do residential treatment in Pennsylvania. The thought horrified me. I didn't want to be so far from my family, not after I felt I had almost lost them. I was scared of going away, but finally realized it was only 28 days and it was best thing to do for my mind and body—for my life.

28 days turned into seven weeks, by choice. Treatment was and is incredibly hard, but that is part of the journey. I had a difficult time with it at first, getting used to people telling me what to eat and how much, and of course, not wanting to do it. But slowly, I adjusted, and so did my body. **I became healthier.** I had therapy for the first time. I met amazing girls and women who were so strong and fighting this awful disease. They were amazing—are amazing—beautiful girls and women, and we were on this journey together. I surprised myself. I "found" myself. People had told me they wanted Nicole back, but I said, "No, I want a 'new' Nicole." **I wanted to find the Nicole that was hiding inside of me, covered up all of those years.** I wanted to come out stronger and brighter. Recovery was and is an incredible journey and made me so much stronger, not just physically. I got my health back, my mind became free of torment and I had a new appreciation on life.

I realized that it is a beautiful life and I was ready to truly live it.



What helped you most in your recovery?

There were so many things and so many people instrumental to my recovery.

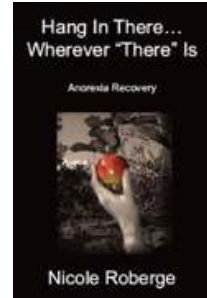
First and most important was absolutely the **strong support of my family.** My parents, sister, brother and all of my extended family were so incredible and there for me through everything—good days, bad days, listening, helping me fight this battle. They continue to be here for me through each celebration and my will be for my upcoming four-year recovery anniversary. It was so wonderful to have such support and have my family, who didn't know a lot about eating disorders, take the time to learn and understand eating disorders and how they could help me. I will forever be appreciative of all they did for me.

Another thing was **admitting I couldn't do it alone.** I was always the one (and still can be!) saying, "I can do it myself," and I thought I could do recovery myself. I couldn't. I needed the help of others—family, a treatment center, therapist, nutritionist, psychiatrist, friends, etc.—to be there for me and help me fight this battle. It was something that was hard for me to admit and do, as I thought to be strong I had to do it on my own, but I realized that it truly is okay to ask for help, and how much other people's help changed my life. That whole process changed me.

A third would be to **remain open to all options and possibilities**—to everything. It is hard when you limit yourself to certain ideals or opinions. If you want or believe things have to be a certain way, then if they are not, it's hard for you to see that they can be another. Such as the recovery process. I think in regards to recovery, you just have to be completely open. At least I did, in terms of menu plans, therapy and even changes in daily routine. Recovery is all about change, and I am not good with change! So I had to be willing to accept that, and so then, positive changes could happen. I continue to maintain that belief in my life today, in all areas.

Congratulations on your book, "Hang In There." Tell us more about it.

Thank you so much! :) I had the idea to write *Hang in There, Wherever "There" Is* immediately when I started recovery. Being a writer and an avid reader, I went straight to the bookstore when I started recovery, thinking that reading a book on eating disorders would aid in my recovery. However, I was very discouraged when I found that a lot of books on the topic were aimed more at teenagers or parents. I was 23...I thought, "Hey, what about me?" I told myself that if and when I made it through the recovery process, I would write a recovery book that would appeal to a broader audience and hopefully show others—anyone, male and female, any age—that there is hope. Recovery is possible. So I started writing. I had kept journals all throughout my eating disorder, so a lot of the material in the book is right from my journals. (Once into recovery, it was almost scary to look at my journals from when I was very sick with anorexia. It was like reading the diary of another person).



The book is split into two parts: the struggle and recovery. Part I explores how I developed the eating disorder, the struggle and the journey through treatment. Part II is the first year in recovery, with the book ending on my one-year recovery anniversary, which was a very happy day spent with my family, and I took them out to dinner to thank them for their support. I wanted to show the changes that were made in my life as I recovered and how it was possible, because there was a point when I really didn't think it was. But it is.

Here I am, four years later. I thought, if I can do this, so can everyone else. I saw other people struggle too, and I just really wanted to try and give some hope to other people out there struggling. That with this book, if I could just reach even one person and have them see my story and how I found recovery, then maybe they could see that they could do it too. That's it. The whole goal. It's not about me. It's about recovery.

It was not hard to share my story at all, because I talk at schools as well and I am not ashamed of having struggled with this disease—because that's what it is. **I did not choose to be sick. But I chose recovery.** This was my journey and if people want to judge me, or hold that stigma against me, they can. But if I can help a person, then who cares what other people think? My story is not for them.

You're also a member of MentorCONNECT—tell us more about your experiences with this online pro-recovery community.

I think MentorCONNECT (www.mentorconnect-ed.org) is a beautiful community and a wonderful way to link people struggling with an eating disorder with people who have found recovery, thus forming amazing relationships. While I was in recovery, I said to someone how I wish there was something like in AA, such as a sponsor/sponsee, because I didn't know anyone in recovery. MentorCONNECT is just like that establishment and I think it is incredible. Recovery is hard for our other supports to understand sometimes, e.g. parents and friends. But someone who has been through it and has recovery, they have been there and can be a really great help and support. They know what the struggle and recovery are like so can offer guidance and advice.

What are your goals, how do you see your future?

In terms of eating disorders, I plan on continuing my volunteer work with MentorCONNECT for as long as possible. I also have a non-profit, Beautiful Lives, for the education and prevention of eating disorders in Connecticut, where I speak at middle and high schools about my story and eating disorders. I also lobby with the Eating Disorders Coalition in D.C. Right now, I am getting out and talking about my experience with recovery and my book, *Hang in There, Wherever "There" Is*, and hope to travel a little more in support of that, doing readings and talks.

I am currently pursuing my M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Fairfield University. In addition to being a freelance journalist, I am working on creative pieces, specifically a novel, and hope to have that published one day. I hope my future holds more work in eating disorder awareness and recovery efforts, more writing opportunities and just enjoying this beautiful life that I am so thankful to have. I almost lost it and I cherish it and all I have in it.

For more information about Nicole and her work, visit www.nicoleroberge.com and <http://hanginthere-nicoleroberge.blogspot.com>

You can also connect with her on Facebook (www.facebook.com/pages/Author-Nicole-Roberge/148729328480627)



Health – Recovery – Freedom – Happiness

There is honor in the fight towards recovery from addiction

By Lindsey

I am a 28-year-old woman from Boston, MA. I grew up in Cleveland, OH and came to Boston in 2007. I have started a blog (<http://healthrecoveryfreedomhappiness.com>) as part of my recovery process from an eating disorder (ED). I want to offer hope and inspiration to those suffering from eating disorders and other addictions. I have entitled it: "**Health, Recovery, Freedom, Happiness.**" The order of these words is not random, I believe health comes first, then recovery, which leads to freedom, and in turn, creates happiness.

A little bit of Hope

Source: <http://healthrecoveryfreedomhappiness.com>

I have been battling ED for most of my life; he remained under the surface since I was a young girl but he reared his ugly head in 2001 and I fought like hell until 2008, when I thought he was dead, gone forever. While he appeared from time to time, I was able to keep him away, to find love and forgive myself, and find health.

In August 2010, he grabbed hold of me, again, and held me down, for months. It happened so quickly, I didn't even see him coming. My psychologist forced me into residential treatment at the Cambridge Eating Disorder Center, and they saved my life. As I sit here, on my last night of residential treatment (January 2, 2011), I feel proud and grateful. Proud of myself for fighting, even though at first it was for other people—**somewhere along the way, I began fighting for ME.** And grateful for the support of my family and friends. It's times like these when I realize how lucky I am to have so many people in my corner. ED made me believe everyone was gone, that I was all by myself, that I was nothing. So thank you, all of you, for reminding me of who I am and what I have; without you, I would not have made it.

I look around the unit, watch courageous women come and go, watch them crumble, watch them rise, watch them suffer; and I want so badly to fight for them, and to silence ED once and for all. But I can't do it for them, and that scares me. So all I can do is fight for myself, and hope that they see **it's possible to overcome this deadly illness.** And maybe, just maybe, they will find some hope, through me. And maybe that little bit of hope will carry them through this terrifying fight, and they will come out on the other side. Happy, healthy, and recovered. Remember, there is honor in the fight. xoxo

For more information about Lindsey and her blog, visit <http://healthrecoveryfreedomhappiness.com>.

The following letter was written to my eating disorder (ED) from my mother. She wrote this in November of 2010, right before I entered into residential treatment at the Cambridge Eating Disorder Center.

A Mother's Letter to Ed

Source: <http://healthrecoveryfreedomhappiness.com>

Dear Ed,

I've been meaning to write to you for awhile. There's a lot I have to say. I remember the day my daughter told me you came to visit her. It was nine years ago and I was on the phone with her walking to my car after work. I'll never forget that call. It changed her life and mine, and her Dad's and her brother's and grandparents'. I mistakenly thought at the time that you would visit for just a short while. I had no idea what you were capable of.

You took over. You took her mind, her personality; you made her sick and sad. You took her self-esteem and the worst thing of all was that you made her forget who she was. You made me and her Dad cry, feel sick, lose sleep, worry constantly, feel sadness we didn't know existed, and you made her brother long for his big sister who had been his friend.

I decided nine years ago that I wanted to know all about you so I read, and I read, and read some more. And the more I read, the more I learned about you, the more I hated you. I don't know you in the same way she does, but I know a lot, and I despise you.

Here's what else I know. I know that she is stronger than you. She left you for two years and she's getting ready to leave you again. She had a few years of being without you and so she saw what that was like. She did it before so I know she is capable of doing it again.

I know a lot of other things you don't know. I know what even she has forgotten. I know that girl in a way that you can't, because I'm her mother. I knew her when she was a little girl who you never met.

So here's what else I know that you don't. She is smart and very capable, articulate and a great writer. She is loyal and a good friend and will someday make a husband one lucky guy. She has the greatest laugh and a wonderful sense of humor. I know that she has more empathy than anyone I know. And maybe that's from knowing you Ed. She really understands what it's like for someone to struggle. She has a true gift for working with children with autism. She is cherished by her father and adored by her brother. She is still the dearest sweetest brown-eyed girl in the world to her grandmother. What she means to me is difficult to even put into words. She is my special daughter and my dear friend.

So you see, Ed, she's too important to all of us to let you have her. She's going to fight and in the end she's going to win, again. And this time you're going to melt into a little mason jar with a strong lid on it and then you're going up in the cold attic where I hope you're shivering all the time, the way you made her shiver. You will be put into a steel box with a lock on it and you're going to live up there freezing forever because we are all done with you. We won't forget you. You're too unforgettable, but we don't want you in our lives anymore.

Sincerely,

Her Mom



Please Hear What I'm Not Saying

By Ashley, with the help and support of Elizabeth and Lindsey

Don't be fooled by me. Don't be fooled by the masks I wear,
For I wear a mask, I wear a thousand masks, masks that I am afraid to take off,
But none of them are me, pretending is an art that is second nature to me,
But don't be fooled, for God's sake, don't be fooled.
What you see on the surface is not always what is inside,
What I hold on the outside is not on my inside,
Don't be fooled by the face I can hold in front of you at times,
I give you the impression that I am secure,
That all is sunny and unruffled with me, within as well as without,
That confidence is my name and coolness is my game,
That the water is calm and I am in command, and that I need no one.
Please don't believe me, please!
My surface may be smooth but my surface but my surface is my mask,
My varying and ever concealing mask.
Beneath lies no smugness, no complacence,
Beneath dwells the real me,
In confusion and fear, in loneliness.
I idly chatter with you in the suave tones of surface talk,
I tell you everything that's really nothing, of what is crying within me.
So when I am going through my routine,
Please don't be fooled by what I'm not saying,
And what I'd like to be able say, what for recovery I need to say.
But what I can't say.
Only you can call me into aliveness,
Each time you're kind and gentle, and encouraging.
My heart begins to grow wings,
Very small wings, very feeble wings but wings.
With your sensitivity and sympathy, and your power of understanding,
You can breathe life into me, I want you to know that.
I want you to know how important you are to me,
How you can be a creator of the person that is me if you choose to.
Please choose me. Do not pass me by. It will not be easy for you.
My long conviction of worthlessness builds strong walls.
The nearer you approach to me, the blinder I may strike back.
I fight against the very thing I cry out for.
But I am told that love is stronger than wall.
In this lies my hope. My only hope.
Please don't believe my mask.
Please come behind it to glimpse the real me.
Please speak to me, share a little of yourself with me,
At least recognize me. Don't pass me by because of my mask,
Recognize me, help me recover,
Please, because you care.

By Ashley, with the help and support of Elisabeth and Lindsey. For more information about Ashley, visit <http://beinglovedbyme.blogspot.com>



Karen's Healing Column:

Live Life, Not Death

**"Letting go of the things that are behind ...
I press on towards to the goal ahead of me."**

~ Paul, the Apostle.

The past can live loud in our thoughts. It can keep coming into each new day with us. There is a place to examine it and resolve it.

There is also a place to resolve to let it go.

To help create the habit of letting it go, every morning, when you are preparing for the day, let it go.

Visualize yourself doing this. Throw it over the back of a ship. Toss it out of an airplane. Throw it in the trash.

Perhaps your own inspired visual image will come to mind that you can use.

And focus your thoughts and sights on your new goal. Gently bring yourself back to it during the day as needed.

Find ways to grow the new goal. Develop a new mental image of yourself. **See yourself doing what you believe you are meant to do.** Read and listen to materials that encourage these.

Daily you will find the past growing dim.

Until one day you get up and the new is strong in your personhood.

I trust you will have a beautiful month,

Karen

About Karen Cook, M.A.: Karen, who is an eating disorder survivor herself, has over fifteen years of counselling experience in private practice working alongside women in a variety of their life's concerns and difficulties, including eating disorders. She is a professional counselor serving the **Langley and Vancouver community in BC, Canada**. If you are interested in getting in touch with Karen, please send an email to kcservices@shaw.ca or visit her website at www.karencookcounselling.com

A Girl Called Tim: Escape from an Eating Disorder Hell

One on one with Australian author June Alexander

Tell us a bit about yourself.



I live on the Bellarine Peninsula in Victoria, Australia. I am a writer, a mother and a grandmother. I have three grandchildren, aged one to four who, together with three meals and three snacks daily, are my 'best medicine'! The grandchildren are expert at encouraging me to live in the moment.

I also have a two-year-old Staffordshire Terrier, Harley, with whom I enjoy daily walks along the seashore, and two 12-year-old cats who purr loudly and are very loving.

Today my life revolves around family, writing and advocating improved healthcare for people with eating disorders.

My other hobbies are gardening—both vegetables and flowers—and reading. But writing is my passion! Words are my friends.

Since gaining freedom from my eating disorder in 2006 and resigning from full-time newspaper journalism in 2007, I have written three books on eating disorders. *A Girl Called Tim* is my personal story. It is my 'literary Everest.' The other two books complement my memoir: *My Kid is Back*, co-author Prof. Daniel Le Grange (released in 2009 and 2010) and *A Collaborative Approach to Eating Disorders*, co-editor Prof. Janet Treasure (due to release in June 2011).



When did your struggles with eating disorders begin?

My eating disorder began in my childhood on a dairy farm in East Gippsland. The younger of two daughters, I was my dad's shadow. If not helping my dad on the farm, I would be exploring the adjacent bushland and river, or reading any literature I could find.

Eleven was a memorable age because that year, 1962, electricity was connected to our property. Eleven was also the age I was in Grade Six and developed anorexia nervosa.

Early that year came news the school doctor would visit our small rural school of 22 students. I wasn't afraid of the doctor, but was terrified at the thought of undressing in the one-room school, in view of my male teacher, a cousin who boarded in my parents' home. I was the only girl in my school with breasts and was embarrassed by them.

I expressed my fears to my mother and sister. Both said I had nothing to worry about. But I did. I didn't know where to turn in coping with this upcoming doctor's visit. My anxiety intensified. In the school-ground one day, it triggered a thought, and offered me a way out.

The school doctor came and went but the thought remained. The thought, which initially I thought a friend, became a monster, its voracious tentacles spreading through my mind and devouring holes in my soul. I had developed anorexia.

My eating disorder had nothing to do with the glossy magazines and slim-bean models that are often cited as the causes of eating disorders. It had everything to do with genetics and environment: confusion regarding sexuality and identity, and feelings of alienation and rejection.

How did you get started in your recovery?

Until my mid-20s I was unaware I had an illness or that help was available—I simply thought I was weak for not coping.

I did not have the support or understanding of my parents or sister. When I tried to describe my feelings, I was told I had Satan within me, I was not taking enough notice of God, I thought too much about myself, I should pull up my socks and for goodness sake, why couldn't I be like other girls in the district.

To get better, I had to reach out and find others to help me.

Over the next six years, doctors frequently misdiagnosed me. Life became a living hell, filled with dark holes and deep chasms.

At 32, I was referred to a city-based psychiatrist, Professor Graham Burrows, who understood my illness. He gave me hope. This marked the start of my recovery.

My anorexia-bulimia had a head start—it had been raging for 21 years. It had been everywhere with me: through childhood, adolescence, marriage, motherhood and career. Sapping my will to live, it had evolved into chronic anxiety and depression. To deaden the pain within, I hit my head until it bled.

My battle for freedom led me down a tortuous road of self-discovery. Relationships suffered relentlessly. I was attracted to men who epitomised my illness: outwardly charming but manipulative, dominating, chaotic and abusive.

I took more than 40 years to rebuild my sense of self, to starve my illness of its power. Emerging from a prism, a prison, entered when I was 11 years old, I began to feel safe and secure, and to enjoy food. Above all, I had the delicious feeling that “now I am me.”

I had one more challenge: I wanted to ease off my prescription drugs—I had been taking them for more than 20 years—to be “totally me” while researching and writing my memoir. With my psychiatrist’s guidance, over a period of seven months, I achieved this, too. Four years on, I continue to live freely and happily without medication.



Throughout my illness I had felt I would recover more quickly if my family understood what my inner battle was like. I wanted to write about this so others would not suffer as deeply or as long as myself.

What helped you most in your recovery?

Strategies used in regaining my self and maintaining recovery:

- Without fail, eating three meals and three snacks daily. Food is medicine.
- No calorie-counting, and no weighing.
- Employment can provide a sense of purpose and self-worth at a time when nothing else does.
- Being candid with understanding family members, as they provide ongoing support.
- Keeping a journal and listing positive things done during the day, like planting seedlings, baking a cake, phoning a friend.
- When feeling anxious, dividing the day into quarters. Making it to 10:30 am, and writing down how I am coping, again at 1 pm, and so on.
- Repeating affirmations, such as “Action beats anxiety” and “I deserve to be treated with respect”, at times of stress.

Words of encouragement for individuals struggling with eating disorders.

My message to anyone right now suffering an eating disorder in silence: “Don’t delay in seeking help! You are NOT weak! You are STRONG! The sooner you reach out for help, the sooner you will conquer your illness and be free.”

Your will and faith, the love of your carers and the guidance of your therapy team will help you recover. Turning points can come in unexpected and delightful ways to strengthen your self-esteem.

I was 47 when a therapist suggested I try separating my sense of self from my eating disorder. Another eight years would pass while I mastered this vital step. At the time I had only a thread of myself to hang on to—the rest was consumed by my illness. At one of my lowest points, when feeling totally rejected by my family—everyone but me was invited to my father-in-law's 90th birthday—I came the realisation that God had given me a right to be born. God had not given up on me. To know that nobody could take this right away from me was remarkably empowering.



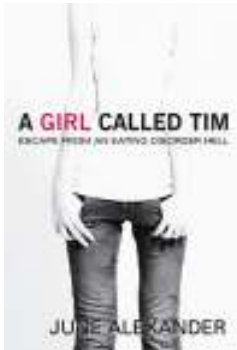
To families today who are feeling concerned, I say: “Become involved immediately you suspect your child may be developing anorexia nervosa. Your gut instinct is almost always right. See a doctor immediately and ask about family-based treatment.

One of the views I enjoy on my daily walk.

Family-based treatment harnesses the power of your love and builds on your strengths in fighting anorexia nervosa. Your participation will speed the recovery of your child and you will be united as a family unit. This illness thrives on isolating and destroying relationships. Therefore, reach out and communicate, even when it hurts; the rewards will be great.

Such treatment was unheard of when I developed anorexia at age 11 in the 1960s. My family had no idea how to help me. I took more than 40 years to escape the illness that invaded my mind. I wish it had been available when I was 11. Then, I would not have had to battle for more than four decades to say: Now I am me.

Congratulations on your book, “A Girl Called Tim.” Tell us more about it.



Be assured—you CAN recover and improve your quality of life.

A Girl Called Tim—written almost entirely from my diaries, which I began writing at the age of 12—describes how I tried to “do it” alone, and eventually accepted that **I had to be brave and ask for help**. Finding the right help was another challenge. It is important to keep trying until you meet a person who you can trust. One must never give up on the road to recovery. The many years of being “lost” in and “held captive” by eating disorders make freedom all the more special.

A Girl Called Tim chronicles almost half a century of living with eating disorders: from the gradual disintegration of a mind, followed by the slow steps towards recovery, I acquired the skills and knowledge that provided me with the empowerment to pave my way to freedom. My memoir offers a beacon of hope to anybody caught up in a struggle and sends a compelling message: NEVER GIVE UP.



For more information about June and her work, visit www.junealexander.com

For more information about *My Kid is Back—Empowering Parents to Beat Anorexia Nervosa*, visit www.routledge mentalhealth.com/my-kid-is-back-9780415581158

For more information about *A Collaborative Approach for Eating Disorders*, visit www.routledge mentalhealth.com/a-collaborative-approach-to-eating-disorders-9780415581462

You can also connect with June online through Twitter (<http://twitter.com/junealexanderAU>) and Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/June-Alexander/178756632157236>).

Never give up! You can recover!

Letters to My Body

By Andrea Owen



Part 1:

Writing this letter has been the single most powerful thing in healing my body image issues. I encourage you to do the same. Maybe you don't feel the need to apologize to your body like I did, but the experience of talking to my body as if it were a person was profound. I realized that if my body were a real person that I cared about, never in a million years would I think about, talk about or treat someone like I have my body. I haven't filled my body with drugs, smoking or excessive alcohol, but I feel this abuse I have done is terrible.

Making peace with your body isn't as easy as just saying you are going to do it, at least not for me. It's taken work and commitment. I never want to pass on body image issues to my children and needed to make a change. This letter forced me to take responsibility for my actions, forgive myself for what I had done, and move on.

Dear Body,

This feels really strange and awkward writing a letter to you, but I think it's necessary and long overdue. It just came to me about 40 or so minutes ago that I owe you an apology. So here it goes.

I'm sorry that I've hated you. I'm sorry that I've cursed at you for being fat when 99% of the time you weren't, and even if you were, it wasn't your fault. I'm sorry that I wished you were different when all you ever were was good to me. I'm sorry that I compared you to others.

I'm sorry that I starved you when you needed food. I'm sorry for punishing you by going without food as a trade-off for not exercising or being a certain weight on the scale. I'm sorry that I pushed you to the limits with too much exercise when you needed rest. On the treadmill I would run miles and miles, not in the name of fitness, and you said you couldn't take anymore. I didn't listen to you when you were trying to tell me to stop. You asked me for more calories and I said no.

You've always been there for me, even when I let you down. I'm so very lucky to have you. Legs: You've always been strong and taken me wherever I needed to go, even when I hated the thighs. Arms: I haven't been too mean to you, but hands, lately I've been hateful by saying you look old and worn-out. But you've been wonderful. And belly: I think I've been the worst to you. I've hated you since puberty. When you started to stick out and I realized I would never have a completely flat stomach like so many other girls did. I have loathed you for that and I'm sorry. You gave me the most precious gift I could ever ask for: my son, and soon, another baby, so go ahead and stick out all you want. And to my skin: I've been mean to you too, comparing you to others, wishing you were different. I'm sorry, you've been great too.

So I now say "thank you" with all of my heart and soul. Thank you for doing your best all these years while enduring my negativity. Thank you for loving me back when I didn't love you. And thank you for staying healthy. You are beautiful.

I love you. I really, really do. I love you now more than ever.

Love always,

Me

Part 2:

Dear Body,

A while back I wrote you a letter to tell you I was sorry for spending all those years hating you. I hope you accepted my apology, and today I want to tell you something else: how much I love you.

Really? You're surprised, did you say? I know I've been treating you much better the last several years than I had before, and not only is that important, but I think telling you is equally important. Our relationship has changed for the better, I know you agree, and it's really up to me from now on. Because let's face it: You've never done anything wrong to me. You've always loved me and for many years I did nothing but take you for granted and treat you like crap most of the time.

But, that's not what this is about. I want to tell you that I truly love you with all of my heart and soul. To say that makes my chest swell with emotion, because you deserve it so much. For what you have given me, I could never repay you. You work your hardest to keep me healthy and happy and that is all I could ever ask for.

And about those babies. Those two amazing, beautiful beings that you allowed to grow and gave exactly what they needed...well, you created two masterpieces, really. And don't get me started on the whole birth thing...you really had a mind of your own with that one. So, thank you for that. I love you a million times over for that alone. Perfection, in and of itself.

The fact that you give me life is spectacular. You allow me to walk, talk and think; all of those things are simply put but, you do so much more. I love you not only for what you do, but the machine that you are. In my world, you're a badass.

I'm finally at a place where I can say I love you unconditionally. And to say that is a big, huge freakin' statement. No matter what you do, or what you look like. No matter if you get sick, if you gain weight, if you get stretch marks, if you sag and wrinkle. Because I know you do all of that not because you're mad at me, but just because it's just....well....biology. No more fights with you, no more hate. Ever. Just love.

It's the least I can do for what you have given me.

So dear body, with that, again, I love you. I love you for what you've given me, how you've forgiven me for what I've done, and I love you for the life I have ahead of me. The life I will live with you. It's you and me, baby, forever.

Love,

Andrea



For more information about Andrea Owen and her work, visit <http://yourkickasslife.com>

You can also connect with Andrea on **Twitter** (http://twitter.com/andrea_owen) and **Facebook** (<http://www.facebook.com/yourkickasslife>)

**"Life's too short
for it not to kick ass!"**

Eating Disorders and Singing

By Judy Rodman with Jenni Schaefer

Eating disorders are now epidemic. Singers and others in the entertainment business with its requisite media exposure are, I believe, especially vulnerable to these debilitating secret illnesses.

No one can approach their full vocal potential while chained to an eating disorder.

Why?

Because the voice will have problems in these areas:

- **Breathing (power)**
- **Tone (path through an open throat)**
- **Communication (performance)**

That's right: with an eating disorder, everything I teach in Power, Path & Performance vocal training—everything necessary to the workings of your voice—is compromised and plagued with problems, some very pesky to diagnose and correct.

From denial to her long-term recovery from anorexia and bulimia, I've been **Jenni Schaefer's** voice teacher and friend. Jenni recovered using a unique therapeutic approach that involved treating her eating disorder as a relationship, rather than an illness or condition. Jenni actually named her anorexia/bulimia, "Ed," an acronym for "eating disorder." She and I co-wrote the song "Life Without Ed," which is also the title of her McGraw-Hill book endorsed by Dr. Phil and many others.

Testimonials tell us her story is powerful, so here it is from both our points of reference:

What I noticed the first time I met Jenni was her strange numbness. She couldn't move out of the "guarded stance": slumped shoulders, head hung forward, eyebrows frozen, jaw clenched, spine and hips frozen, arms limp and legs locked. She was like a stick figure. Her voice was thin, colorless. She complained that her throat hurt when she sang. Her range was limited, and she had several 'breaks' in her voice. I tried to help her loosen up, but I could barely get her to lift her arms from her sides to allow ribcage expansion. She inhaled from the upper chest in short gasps.

Jenni speaks... "With Ed, I was disconnected from my body...felt like a floating head. I was rigid and had difficulty moving. In therapy sessions, I was encouraged to 'just move'—anything."

I also had a lot of trouble helping Jenni connect to her songs. When I asked her to visualize singing "My Valentine" to someone she loved, she couldn't think of anyone! Finally she began to connect by imagining singing to children in a cancer ward where she had worked. An odd thing: she didn't want me to look at her when she sang.

Jenni... "I was disconnected from feelings. I lived in my head. A big purpose of my eating disorder was to starve and stuff feelings—to keep me out of my emotions. So when I was supposed to connect with feelings in a song, it was not only completely foreign to me, it was also terrifying."

Jenni was easily deflated and crushed. I had to be very careful not to push her too far with exercises. She somehow needed to sing, but music didn't seem to move her. Because she didn't have the energy to keep her posture erect and flexible, she usually just stood still and lifeless. Or walked like a zombie.

Jenni... "I had no energy—restricting, bingeing and purging requires a lot of energy (physical and emotional) and leaves little left for anything else."

Jenni couldn't understand why she didn't feel something. She would watch me express feelings she couldn't experience, and I think that was a big part of why she reached out for help. She asked me to pray for her. She thought since she didn't *feel* something, she couldn't pray herself.

Jenni... "Singing is spiritual. An eating disorder kills all spiritual connection. This was a huge hurdle."

Little by little, as Jenni got help, she got stronger. However, voice lessons became even harder. She developed a diaphragmatic spasm of some kind and a kind of fatalism took hold, making her expect the strange uncontrolled vibrato weirdness to happen at a certain place in her range. I sent her to Vanderbilt Voice Clinic. Only when they couldn't find anything organically wrong did Jenni start to believe she could beat this strange vocal problem. Soon after, I was able to coach her into the flexible rib stretch necessary to allow the issue to completely disappear.

Jenni... "Anorexia is characterized by intense perfectionism. While singing, I would concentrate more on being perfect than on getting a greater message across."

Jenni kept improving, but it was two steps forward, one step back. It was hard for her to picture singing to someone. She was stuck in self-consciousness. She began to experience feelings, but with the feelings came anger at being critiqued, which made her feel judged. At one point, I suggested she practice differently and she flew into a rage. I didn't see it coming. I didn't read the signs that said I was pushing too far, and the lesson ended in disaster.

Jenni... "All eating disorders are characterized by constant self-criticism. It is difficult to sing when a negative voice is constantly screaming in your ear."

The trust and friendship Jenni and I had developed made the misunderstanding short-lived. We got back to the business of vocal training and then another challenge set in. It was a long season of intense sadness. I was afraid for her; she would cry, literally for days, and then go numb. She pushed people away, saying she had no friends. For a while, she stopped singing and cancelled voice lessons.

Jenni... "Depression is often an underlying symptom of an eating disorder. When lost in despair and hopelessness, singing can seem too vulnerable because emotions might leak out. So Ed would often build yet another 'protective' wall."

Jenni and I began working together again, and this time every lesson seemed to break new ground. Her recovery was solid, her physical and emotional health much more stable. I watched her persevere with great courage through those monumental battles of recovery. And I watched her find her voice at last.

One of the last pieces in the puzzle was put in place by the brilliant performance coach **Diane Kimbrough**. Diane told Jenni to stop worrying about "going there" every time she sang. She said this is way too much pressure for an artist to have to re-experience the emotional scene during every performance. Instead, Diane suggested, forget yourself and make THEM (the audience) feel something! It was a miracle.

Jenni stopped focusing inward and made the connection, through the song, to someone else. Her voice is now strong, controlled, confident and beautiful. She FEELS joy, frustration, anger, and love. All of this is giving her a voice with which to rock the world. She speaks and sings all over the country to entertain, teach and prove that recovery from an eating disorder is indeed possible. And oh, I so love to hear her laugh!

For those struggling with an eating disorder, we hope you read in our story that it's never too late to reach out for help, start healing—and start singing your heart out!

Judy Rodman: Singer, songwriter, producer, vocal instructor, developer of *Power, Path & Performance™* vocal training: Discover, Heal, Maximize YOUR Voice! For more information, visit Judy's website at www.judyrodman.com

Jenni Schaefer: Singer/songwriter, speaker, and author of *Life Without Ed: How One Woman Declared Independence from Her Eating Disorder and How You Can Too* (McGraw-Hill) and *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me: Recover from Your Eating Disorder and Fall in Love with Life* (McGraw-Hill). Jenni is a consultant with Center For Change in Orem, Utah. For more information, visit Jenni's website at www.jennischaefer.com. Jenni is also on Facebook.

Diane Kimbrough: For more information, email dk.ideas@comcast.net



MentorCONNECT Teleconference Series Presents:

Recovery is Possible: Parenting While in Recovery

You are invited to attend a **FREE** teleconference with Dr. Dena Cabrera

In this teleconference, we welcome Dena Cabrera, PsyD, clinical psychologist and nationally known speaker. Dr. Cabrera brings a special focus to the issue of parents who are juggling the dual responsibilities of raising confident, healthy children while simultaneously going through their own journey of recovery from an eating disorder. We will learn from Dr. Cabrera's own research into the challenges and opportunities such a dual role brings, and delve into how parents in recovery can care well for themselves, their children, and their families.



Dr. Cabrera is a Clinical Psychologist and a member of Remuda Ranch's National Speaker's Bureau. She received her doctorate in psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology. She has been with Remuda Ranch since 1999. For more information about Remuda Ranch, visit www.remudaranch.com

When: Wednesday, March 9th 2011
Time: 9:00pm Eastern / 8:00pm Central /
7:00pm Mountain / 6:00pm Pacific
RSVP at <http://mentorconnect.eventbrite.com>



MentorCONNECT is the first global online eating disorders mentoring community. Membership and all services are always free to members, and certain events are also opened up to the larger community. In addition to offering one-on-one mentoring matches, membership includes access to a password-protected, moderated, PRO-recovery community forum with two live weekly e-support groups and one Houston-based book study support group, periodic retreats and special events, a wide variety of online themed support groups, recovery blogs, personalized profile pages, the ability to upload photos/video/songs/artwork, and moderated chat / email services. To volunteer your services as a caring mentor, be matched with a mentor, or find general support, visit us at www.mentorconnect-ed.org

Relationships Replace Eating Disorders



“Relationships Replace Eating Disorders” with Shannon Cutts:

Why Does it Seem So Much Easier to Love Others?

If someone asked you, “**Do you love yourself?**”, you might be tempted to give a quick thought-free response, “Of course!” Or maybe you would instead reply, “Well, some days I do and some days I don’t.” Or maybe you’d even go so far as to share, “Nope, not so much.”

Now substitute the question, “**Do you love your pet/spouse/best friend/child?**” How would your answer change? What gives your love for others such consistency, while your love for yourself flickers perhaps only intermittently if at all? And why does it seem so much easier to love others – even others who are difficult to love?

To help us answer this question, I will call in volunteer A: My pet bird, Pearl. When Pearl poops on my favorite sweater (or anything else for that matter) I can instantly make the distinction between loving her and not liking what she has done. It feels effortless, actually – even while I am grumbling and muttering about the cleanup at hand, I am simultaneously cooing over her soft black eyes, cute round fluffy body, long sleek grey feathers... as I clean, she chirps at me, oblivious that anything in her behavior could be grounds for withdrawing love.

In other words, because she doesn’t doubt my love for her, I don’t either.

Now, let’s examine volunteer B: A member of my family who will not stop harping about the things I need to change about my appearance. Here, extending love is just a tad bit more strenuous; there are no soft black eyes to adore, and instead of chirping my ears are more frequently assailed with criticism. Yet, I still make the effort to maintain relations with this member of my family because experience has shown me that friends and relationships may come and go, but family lasts forever.

Or, simply put, I love him because I have decided it is my job to love those who share my DNA.

Finally, we can turn our attention to volunteer C: Me. I wake up in the morning and get ready for work. I head out the door, and do not realize until I’m halfway down the street that I have forgotten my purse at home. I start to grumble, then curse. I say to myself, “Great planning, genius – please tell me you are not going to be this idiotic all day!” Other unkind comments soon follow, until I am being meaner to myself than I would be to a tree roach discovered scuttling across my smooth hardwood floors. I am filled with self-loathing, neatly divorcing myself from me without even noticing the transition... when all of a sudden I am jolted out of my ugly reverie by “ping!”, I check my phone and there is a text from my best friend. Her message? “You’re the best friend ever and I am so lucky to have you in my life!”

What does she know about my worthiness to be loved that I don’t?

A lot. The trouble with self-love is that it must necessarily be self-administered, because it is self-contained. For this reason, it is also ultimately insecure, because we are relational creatures and we crave – *need* – others to bounce ideas off of. We ask our friends, “do you think I should date that person?” We ask our significant other, “should I get a puppy or a kitten?” But who can we ask who knows us from the inside out when we need to know if we should love ourselves?

Beyond that, we have additional trouble with self-love because when it is time to make a choice, we have not done our homework. We have not gotten to know ourselves from the inside out either, and because of that, we feel unable to make the commitment – the choice – to extend love to ourselves. In fact, due to this oversight in self-knowledge, we have not made any choice at all...so that when, in the midst of a hard hour, hard day, or hard year, we apply to ourselves for our own sympathy vote, we don’t know who we are voting for, or why we should vote in our own favor.

We don’t know who we are.

This is why the antidote to self-hate is relationship. **If you want to love yourself, then get to know yourself** – I mean *really* know yourself. Study and learn about and engage with yourself until you become your own beloved.

Then watch your trouble with self-love disappear.

Warmly and with HOPE,

Shannon Cutts is the author of **Beating Ana: How to Outsmart Your Eating Disorder and Take Your Life Back**. She is also the founder of **MentorCONNECT** (www.mentorconnect-ed.org), the first global mentoring community to connect those in strong recovery from eating disorders with those who need recovery support. For more information about Shannon and her work, visit www.key-to-life.com



Jenni Schaefer's Recovery CD Giveaway

This month you have the chance to win a copy of Jenni's CD "phoenix, Tennessee"

(courtesy of Jenni Schaefer)

About Jenni's CD "phoenix, Tennessee"

Jenni Schaefer's long-awaited CD is finally here! Capturing her healing journey in Tennessee, this alternative country/pop CD includes seven songs that were written and produced by Jenni and hit songwriters in Nashville. The CD includes the popular singles from her books, "Life Without Ed" (from *Life Without Ed*) and "It's Okay to be Happy" (from *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me*). Jenni's music has helped many people to stay on the path of recovery and is often used by professionals in groups.

Jenni Schaefer



phoenix, Tennessee

"I can't tell you how many years I have waited for a CD of this nature. I have used Jenni's music in my therapy groups and can definitively say that it has touched many lives and has been a catalyst for change." – *Lynette Taylor, MT-BC, Music Therapist, Center for Change in Orem, UT*

"I love to listen to 'Its Okay To Be Happy' when I'm feeling down, because it always lifts me up!" – *Lanie from WI*

"Jenni's song ('Life Without Ed') is full of hope, peace, and truth. It gave me the inspiration I needed to push through another day. I often listen to the song when I feel trapped in Ed's lies and am comforted knowing that life without Ed can be a reality." – *Kelly from TX*

How to enter the contest...

Simply send an email to giveaway@youarenotalonebook.com

and put "Music" in the subject line.

The drawing will be held on **March 15th**

and the winner will be contacted via email.

Feel free to also include feedback about the Support Letter—what you like the most, topic suggestions, etc. And if you want to share your poems, story, recovery tips, or inspiring artwork with the Support Letter community, feel free to email them as well.

A big thank-you in advance from your fellow Support Letter readers!

😊😊😊 **Good luck!** 😊😊😊



FREE Gift Included: Also included is the *You Are Not Alone Companion CD* (produced by eating disorder survivor and award-winning singer & songwriter Shannon Cutts), which is filled with healing songs by women who are either fully recovered or in strong recovery from an eating disorder (**value of \$9.95 - yours for free with *You Are Not Alone, Volume 2* book purchase!**)

What People Are Saying About *You Are Not Alone, Volume 2* (plus *FREE Companion CD*)

“To know that others have struggled just as much, and that they cannot ‘only’ survive, but **thrive** and live a **better life**, is truly inspiring.”

– **Ashley P. from BC, Canada**, is in recovery from anorexia.
*She encourages others to find their voice,
and never give up on themselves.*

“**This is a powerful collection of hopes, dreams, despair...and victories!** They are all war stories, written by survivors. Thank you to Andrea and to each of the people who share their journeys with eating disorders. **I started this book and read it all the way through.** It reminded me of so many of the stages that I went through for thirty years, struggling with my eating disorder all alone. Back then, no one talked about it, and I had no role models to know that recovery is even possible! Well, now I am living proof that it is...and that life can be fabulous once you give up “perfect!” If you or someone you know needs help, please speak up and tell someone. **Don’t settle for less than wonderful in your life. And don’t give up five minutes before the miracle!**”

– **Barbara Niven**, actress, speaker, coach, and eating disorder victim turned warrior. (www.barbaraniven.com)

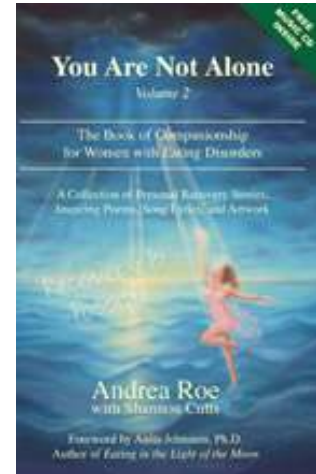
“I believe many people suffering with eating disorders ask one question in common: if recovery is possible. Seeking an answer is somehow easier than taking the necessary steps towards recovery! Over the last four years I have been a constant reader of Andrea Roe’s work! Her writing and knowledge of anorexia, bulimia and other associated eating disorders are not only useful but also inspirational. Now with Andrea’s second book *You Are Not Alone, Volume 2* come more inspirational readings, perfect for anyone suffering, recovering, or supporting someone with an eating disorder. I personally recommend Andrea Roe’s work, as she has been a shining star in my own personal battle with anorexia. Andrea, I am forever grateful to you for helping me find the right path on my road to recovery and reminding me that I am, in fact, **not alone!!!**”

—**Kara R, 20**, from Australia.

***You Are Not Alone, Volume 2 + Free Companion CD* is available at**
www.youarenotalonebook.com/youarenotalonevol2.php (**FREE shipping to anywhere in the world**)

Profits are donated to eating disorder help and support organizations to help raise awareness and help others in their recovery.

***You Are Not Alone, Volume 2* is a proud sponsor of:**
MentorCONNECT, The Recovery Buddies Project, The Joy Project



Do You Want To Contribute?

I am always looking for submissions for the monthly **YOU ARE NOT ALONE Support Letter**. If you are interested in submitting any material for future editions of the Support Letter, please feel free to send your submission to the following email address: andrea@youarenotalonebook.com

Submissions will be considered for future **YOU ARE NOT ALONE Support Letters** and I will get in touch with you as soon as possible.

What can you submit?

Personal eating disorder stories, inspirational moments, poems, artwork, articles, helpful tips, resources and book submissions, inspirational quotes and meditations, inspirational short stories, important information, nominations for the “Inspiring Woman” segment, and so on. **Feel free to send me whatever it is you want to share!**

I'm looking forward to hearing from you! 😊