

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.

March 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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Relationships Replace Eating Disorders

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of not only attending, but also presenting at the iaedp's (International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals) conference in sunny Phoenix, Arizona.

The presentation was all about the power and benefits of adding a recovery mentor to someone's support team.

During my own recovery, I too had the support of several mentors (at different times in my recovery)—they were an integral part of my treatment team.

Hearing their recovery stories showed me that it was okay to talk about our struggles, and that our lives do not have to continue like this—we don't have to struggle with our eating disorder forever. There is hope! All this hard work really is worth it and a life without the eating disorder is possible.

The biggest thing I got out of being in touch with others who were already recovered was that *if they could get healthy, I COULD TOO!*

Wherever you are at in your healing journey, keep working on your recovery. You are NOT a hopeless case. Recovery really is possible, for all of us! The most important thing is to NOT give up. You can do this!

"If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves."

So true! Remind yourself of this every day.

All the best and take very good care of yourself,

Andrea

Congratulations! ☺ The winner of last month's recovery music CD giveaway is Janine, 45, from California. "I have suffered from anorexia for 26 years, experiencing many slips and slides and ups and downs. I can honestly say that recovery isn't easy, and it doesn't happen without supportive people in your life. I am finally on that road and I attribute my strength and willingness to several things: surrendering ED over to God, seeking treatment, being open and honest with people in my life, the *You Are Not Alone* monthly Support Letter, MentorCONNECT, and Key to Life. Without these solid foundations to lean on I wouldn't be experiencing life today. Relationships do replace eating disorders!"

PS. If you'd like to share your poetry, artwork, story, or recovery tips with the Support Letter community, email me. I am looking forward to hearing from you! ☺

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



You can also connect with me through **Facebook**.



"The Power of Eating Disorder Mentoring"—together with my wonderful co-presenters Shannon Cutts (from MentorCONNECT), Wendy Oliver-Pyatt (from the Oliver-Pyatt Center in Florida), and Mary Ellen Clausen (from Ophelia's Place in New York)



With my husband in sunny Arizona ☺



Chapel of the Holy Cross in breathtaking Sedona, Arizona



Inspirational Quotes:

Words to help you on your journey.

“Obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.”

– *Michael Jordan*

**“Without goals, you will end up going nowhere, or,
you will end up following someone else’s map!
Develop your map today—set your goals and focus!”**

– *Catherine Pulsifer*

“If you can’t make a mistake, you can’t make anything.”

– *Marva Collins*

**“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap,
but by the seeds you plant.”**

– *Robert Louis Stevenson*

“It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves.”

– *Edmund Hillary*

**“The reason most major goals are not achieved
is that we spend our time doing second things first.”**

– *Robert J. McKain*

**“The sun’s energy warms the world. But when you focus it through a magnifying
glass it can start a fire. Focus is so powerful!”**

– *Alan Pariser*

**“The hero is no braver than the ordinary man,
but he is brave five minutes longer.”**

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**“To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan,
but also believe.”**

– *Anatole France*

**“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare,
it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.”**

– *Seneca*

**“If you’re never scared or embarrassed or hurt, it means you never take any
chances.”**

– *Julia Sorel*

**“Though no one can go back and make a brand new start,
anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.”**

– *Carl Bard*

“A person can grow only as much as his horizon allows.”

– *John Powell*

Inspiring Woman – Making a Difference in the World



Kaylin Jeanette Ohler

This month, I have the pleasure of introducing you to eating disorder activist Kaylin Jeanette Ohler. In the following pages, she'll talk about her own struggles with eating disorders and body image issues, her recovery journey, and how she is reaching out to make a difference and inspire others to keep working so hard on their recovery.

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

~~~~~

#### ***Tell us a bit about yourself.***

My name is Kaylin Jeanette Ohler, I am 22 years old, and I grew up in Norfolk, Nebraska. I enjoy reading, writing, hiking, the beach, and being out in nature. I love warm weather, sunsets, my family, and learning more about myself each day. I blush easily. I am a survivor. I love to laugh and smile, and sometimes I do it so much my cheeks hurt. I enjoy singing, dancing, and expressing myself freely. I enjoy art, photography, and all sorts of music. I really like motorcycles, roller coasters, and cannot wait to try skydiving. I enjoy church, and walking in faith. I volunteer and have an insurmountable passion to help others! Cannot wait to see what life has in store.

#### ***When and how did your struggles with eating disorders begin?***

My eating disorder began when I was a five-year-old kindergarten girl wearing ruffles and bright colored headbands. I was extremely self-conscious, shy, uncomfortable being around others, and embarrassed easily, and my feelings were like china glass; they broke very effortlessly.

From pre-school to kindergarten I had already begun comparing myself to the other girls. By kindergarten I began comparing my weight on our take-home report cards. If mine wasn't the lowest I felt unhappy. If my grades were lower; I felt dumb. This cycle only continued and got worse as the years came and went. I learned that makeup made girls prettier and they got attention from guys. I wanted that. I learned what "good and bad" foods were. I couldn't eat those foods if I wanted to be beautiful and thin. If I did allow myself to eat one of the forbidden foods then I had to exercise beyond the already extreme amounts. I started lying to skip meals with family, I went home for "lunch," and did whatever I could to keep my new "healthy" way of life. I was just on a diet. No big deal, right? Wrong. My dearest childhood friend spoke my secret. My mom took me to the doctor where I was diagnosed with anorexia at the end of my fourth grade. This began my very long journey of tears, treatment centers, depression, darkness, and trying to be someone other than myself.

I believed the lies of the media, society, health professionals in my community, and buried myself in calorie counting books. I made collages of what society "deemed" beautiful. I relied on changing myself on the outside because that is what got me accepted. I remember in seventh and eighth grade I was just a plain girl who didn't wear makeup and was simple. That was highly looked down upon. I was like a speck on the wall that everyone walked past. I changed how I acted, talked, walked, dressed, began to paint my face with color, and I was noticed. I got accepted in the "popular crowd," and I faked my happiness once I was.

My ED (eating disorder) became my back-pocket tool. I used it whenever I felt shame, guilt, rejection, fear, anger, loneliness, inferiority, jealousy, or worthlessness. I used it when I was stressed, overwhelmed, didn't do well on a test, to numb myself from family problems, and to escape the reality of my life. Crude comments from people gave me a reason to use it, or so I thought.

**I was told I was a chronic anorexic, I would never recover, and I would battle intensely with this for the rest of my life. I did for many years after that. I felt like most had given up on me, they were tired of the same old problems and broken promises, and that life would be better off without me. But I had some very special people in my world who stood by my side, encouraged me, cried with me, watched me nearly lose my life, and now...they say, "You are glowing. You look so happy. You have your sparkle back."**

## ***How did you get started in your recovery?***

I first began traveling the road to recovery right after I was diagnosed in fourth grade by doing outpatient services. The problem was that I didn't truly want it. I thought I did and I continued to think I did through and throughout every one of my 14 admissions into various treatments and with every professional I encountered. I honestly did what I knew I needed to do in treatment so I could get out and start again. I always made excuses that I could allow myself to engage in certain unhealthy behaviors and "that would be it." I would end up spiraling out of control each time. Some periods without treatment lasted longer but I missed so many years of school from my sixth grade year until my junior year of high school. I made a commitment that I wasn't going to go back to treatment and I was going to make it, but I didn't know how. Everyone really thought I had things together because I graduated early from high school and started college early. After all, I was at a healthy weight, so there must not be anything wrong with me, right? Wrong. I did have a smile plastered on my face but I was struggling inside and crying behind closed doors. I was lying, being manipulative, and full of excuses; I was ungrateful, I couldn't have a healthy relationship, my life was all school/work, and I honestly didn't know who this person was staring back at me in the mirror but I hated her. I didn't want to know myself so why would anyone else? Believe it or not, I lost myself even more when I moved from my hometown of Norfolk, Nebraska to Omaha, Nebraska to continue with schooling there. I lost myself so much that I let people treat me like a doormat, I was taking care of everyone else but myself, I had no voice and when I did I was angry, I didn't think for myself (ED did), I didn't care, I had to quit work, and my life was crashing before me.

In fall of 2009, everything began to surface and reality hit me smack in the face. Actually it felt like someone punched me in the stomach several times without letting up. A dear friend of mine lost her life to the eating disorder at age 19. My sister and I were not talking, I could hardly walk up the stairs without feeling weak, I began to get light-headed all the time, and had a few fainting episodes. There wasn't a week I wasn't sick that year, and I honestly knew I wasn't going to make it if I continued to be a part of the problem rather than the solution.

**I got back in touch with a dietitian who knew me from the beginning and a therapist who had been an amazing part of my life.** They spent their time trying to support, help, and encourage me. It wasn't enough. I knew I needed more but I didn't have insurance and I didn't have the finances to pay. I began searching on the Internet, calling or emailing every treatment center asking about scholarships, financing, and gathering any information I could. I continued to get no after no and dead ends. I didn't stop. I applied for scholarships. I didn't hear back from many and didn't get another one. But by the grace of God I met two amazing women who forever have a special place in my heart: Kirsten (eating disorder survivor and Miss America 2008) and Iora Huglund.

They began a scholarship foundation and I had been in touch with them for a while. They were helping me keep my spirits up while I was waiting, making sure I was still hanging in there. The day they called me and told me I had been chosen to receive treatment out in California, I cried. I could not stop the stream of tears that was stinging my eyes. I felt fear, anxiety, and yet relief. Something in me knew that this was going to be it. I was done. I was going to leave ED behind.

I was so grateful. **This was my ticket to life again.** Yet, I was wrestling with my thoughts on whether or not I should go. It was during that week that I found myself passed out on hardwood floors. I got up sometime in the morning and went to the bathroom to see if I had hurt myself. I wasn't prepared to see what I did. As I looked in the mirror the image staring back at me was a far too familiar one, but nearly made me drop to my knees in shock. I saw this person who was ungodly sick: I looked emaciated, and I was grey, colorless. They were my eyes looking into the mirror but the image was a flashback of my friend's funeral whose life was stolen from Ed. This is what was going to happen to me if I didn't go. I cried. But I packed my bags, I had a friend stay with me, and on July 5, 2010 I entered a life of recovery.

I had my hard times in treatment when I let ED dictate my thoughts and actions, but I began to stand up for my life. I let myself do things I normally wouldn't do. I was laughing and smiling, and my clothes were fitting. I wasn't so emotional, I could think, I had a voice, and I was assertive with what I truly needed. It was amazing but scary. I had never felt this way before—free.

I took yet another leap of faith. I went home for a visit in August and ate my first piece of cake at my nephew Rowan's sixth birthday party. I have never eaten with them on special occasions, let alone cake. It was delicious!

I told my school I wasn't coming back to accept my position in the social work program: I was letting my full-ride go, and I was leaving everyone I knew 1,500 miles away. I knew this was my chance to continue to grow, to just be me, and to keep my recovery. I had no idea where I was going to live, what I would do for a job, or where I would go to school.



I sit here ten months later and I am happy, content, and grateful. Sure, I wish I had my own place and were farther along in school. But I finally was blessed with a job I am passionate about, I found my faith, I have a voice, I respect myself, I have recovery, and I have many wonderful people in my life. **Life truly is wonderful, and to think that it has only just begun for me.**

### ***What helped you most in your recovery?***

What helped me most in my recovery was (1) **finding my faith**. It was truthfully the missing piece I had been looking for and had tried to fill with external means which left me empty. I found an amazing church with so much passion and energy for life, and it truly is like Heaven here on earth there.

(2) **I got honest with myself** and knew that the life I was living wasn't life at all. I was stuck in a prison of my own mind. One that was cold, lonely, and dark. I was so tired of it. I had to be done or it was going to take my life.

(3) **I had to stop trying to be perfect and please everyone**. Imperfection is beauty. Being perfect is a standard that no one can reach and I knew I would end my life trying.

(4) **I had to start loving myself like I loved others**. I could not help others and make the difference I wanted to make if I was sick. I wanted to turn the energy I spent trying to keep the eating disorder and turn it towards recovery, life, and happiness. I wanted to be a healthy role model for my beautiful four-year-old niece, Zoey. I wanted to have a strong, healthy relationship with myself so that I attract others who are positive, respect me, and make me want to be a better person. I also learned that I do not need validation from the outside world; I need it from within myself. Bottom line, I had to pick and choose whether I wanted to live or die; I chose to live.

### ***Tell us more about your passion to make a difference.***

I have a passion and fire inside me to keep spreading awareness about eating disorders. The more people know the better. Knowledge is our sword against eating disorders. Both of my parents were not aware of eating disorders when I was diagnosed in fourth grade. I want parents, children, families, friends, and the community at large to have the support they deserve, to know about the resources available, and have the information they need when they need it.

I really want to bring hope, encouragement, and a message that they are worth the fight. That no one's value is determined by a number, what society deems beautiful, or because of anything external or materialistic things. I want them to know that their true beauty is insurmountable and wonderful. I want to help others shorten their life spent enmeshed in such a dark war within themselves, and help them regain a beautiful, colorful life.

I work at an eating disorder treatment facility, I am a part of different blogs and support sites, I go around and speak at schools for a variety of classes ([www.omaha.com/article/20100223/NEWS02702239848](http://www.omaha.com/article/20100223/NEWS02702239848)), and I am involved with NEDA (National Eating Disorders Association) in any way I can be. **I have learned to not stand back in the shadows, but to use my voice**. I don't wait for others to come up to me; I go to them. I tell them, this is what I want to do, and I ask them to be a part of it. I do not always get the answer I want, but I do not back down and I keep going. I keep going because this is near and dear to me and I love being of service. This is sort of my own little ministry I have with myself.

### ***In 2010, you coordinated the first NEDA walk in Nebraska—tell us more about this experience.***

Coordinating the first NEDA walk in Nebraska was like walking in the dark forest of the Amazon. Okay, I am exaggerating a bit! It was a very time-consuming and wonderful journey. I would do it over again in a heartbeat and plan to continue to do others now that I am here in California, once I get settled.

Many people didn't know if it could be done in the amount of time I had, but I knew deep in my heart that this is what I was destined to do; passion fueled me. I had a few others helping with a few things as well. I started writing letters of support, emailing, calling, and contacting anyone I could in order to get people involved—involved by registering, donating, making in-kind donations for our raffle, refreshments, and t-shirts. I had an amazing person who made a generous in-kind donation of the hundreds of customized shirts, someone who donated personalized flyers I designed, and volunteers who wanted to help in any way they could. I cried so much during this process because I was so grateful for the support. Without the donations, the support of the community, the help of the media that helped me put the message out, and the support of NEDA answering my million questions, this wouldn't have come together as it did.

On the night of June 25, 2010, a friend and I were out writing on the sidewalk with chalk. We were writing encouraging affirmations for the walkers all along the route. It was dark when we got back to the car and I found my

window had been broken out of my car and my personal belongings stolen. I couldn't believe it! Here I was out making the sidewalk pretty and someone vandalized my car! As upsetting as it was, I still kept my spirits high and kept a grateful attitude for all the work that had been accomplished—plus I think I was very tired, so I began to find the whole situation quite funny!

I couldn't believe the morning of the walk had arrived on the beautiful summer morning of June 26. We got there to set up around 7:30 am and what was an empty parking lot turned into hundreds of cars, tables with information, snacks, refreshments, our raffled items, and hundreds of amazing people gathering together to fight. I sit here typing this and I just got the goosebumps thinking about how beautiful it was to see so many people walking together. Walking for those who had been lost, those who were healthy and won, those who are still fighting, people who knew someone, or just people who cared. Many traveled hours and from surrounding states to be there in Omaha, Nebraska. In my heart, it was in honor of two beautiful young women who had just lost their lives' to this destructive battle.

A sight that forever will stand in my heart is when a beautiful mother who had lost her precious daughter only a month before went up and hugged my dad. Wow, my eyes are stinging just thinking about it. It was a day of support, hope, and one to never be forgotten.

The outcome of that day was beyond my wildest dreams. News crews came and covered the event ([www.norfolkdailynews.com/main.asp?SectionID=3&SubSectionID=104&ArticleID=23515&PollID=879&btnView=1](http://www.norfolkdailynews.com/main.asp?SectionID=3&SubSectionID=104&ArticleID=23515&PollID=879&btnView=1)); over 230 individuals came to walk together that day, hundreds others donated financially, and over \$15,000 was raised to support NEDA. It is still amazing to me when I think about it.

For those who are wanting to do an NEDA walk or other events to raise funding and awareness, the NEDA website is wonderful for guidance, and anyone whom you contact with there will guide you and support you every step of the way. Make sure to have a group of people to help and support you. Even the little things we do can make such a difference—and to think it all starts with a desire to help others and to take that first step.



***What are your goals? How do you see your future?***

My vision I have for my future is far beyond my current resources but it allows me to keep reaching and stretching each and every day. I have really learned that everything will come together when the time is right. After five months of becoming a “professional application submitter,” I received a wonderful gift and am beginning a new chapter in my life as I enter a new job. I am privileged to be a house manager at an eating disorder treatment facility here in Southern California. That has been a goal and a passion of mine to reach.

I plan to continue on with my education this fall to finish up a few classes before I begin submitting my application for acceptance into a social work program. There, I will receive my bachelor's and master's to become a licensed clinical social worker. This will allow me to become a therapist and specialize in treating eating-disordered individuals and their families.

I have a vision of starting my own non-profit organization someday, writing/publishing a book, continuing to volunteer and raise awareness for eating disorders, self-esteem and body image. I want to take a few missions trips, continue volunteering and giving back to others, and travel while speaking to others about loving themselves from the inside out. I want to continue to encourage, support, and mentor others who are fighting the same struggle I have for so many years. I want to help break the chains that so many of us are trapped in by the negativity of society, messages we heard as kids; or adults. I want to help other s gain freedom and know that they DO NOT have to be a prisoner of their own mind. Life is so wonderful, beautiful, and enjoyable when we release the thing that has been blocking the sunlight in our lives.

Of course someday, I hope to have a wonderful person to share my life with and have a beautiful family.

No matter what, each day I want to continue to build and strengthen relationships, fall more in love with God, walk in faith, have an endless inner love for myself, and have a grateful heart. I never want to lose my vision for the future and all the greatness to come. Imagination and believing are the key to never-ending possibilities!

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For more information about Kaylin, visit her blog at <http://kaylinkeepinghope.blogspot.com>. You can also connect with her on Facebook or send a message to kaylin129 (at) msn.com—she's looking forward to hearing from you!

**Pro-Recovery Facebook group: “You Are Not Alone. Stand Together. Love Together. Win Together.”**  
[http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group\\_115556955179209](http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_115556955179209)

“You Are Worth It” video by Kaylin: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2WaJ12FvXE&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2WaJ12FvXE&feature=related)



## ***Karen's Healing Column: Live Life, Not Death***

A paradigm shift is like an "Ah-ha" moment. It is when you see something different and you become free from an old way of understanding something and you come into a new way of seeing it. And you are changed for it.

The beauty is you have some control over having them. Reading and journaling are two ways to bring about paradigm shifts. Another is remaining connected to a good community of people. What they say and do opens you up to new things. And yet another way is to think on new thoughts until you own them.

Your daily habits are also paradigms. So, you can also change a paradigm by changing a habit.

ED's (eating disorders) beliefs and habits are paradigms. So, you can change these paradigms by changing your thinking, or changing your habits.

It is best to change a few beliefs and habits at a time. If you attempt too many at a time, you risk relapsing because it is too much change.

### **Making this work in real life**

Let me recommend you work on two or three a month. It takes on average 30 days to change a habit. Pick two thoughts you want to change and one habit.

In the beginning it will be hard. Coach yourself through this by telling yourself it will get easier as you keep going and that one day thinking on the new thoughts and doing the new action will be natural and normal. Do something that opens you up to the new thoughts such as sitting outside while you reflect on the new thoughts. Listen to energetic music that motivates you to a task. Adding the emotional element of these helps you create deep and lasting change.

When you begin your second month, you will repeat the above. The new thoughts and habits will feel challenging, but you then have the last month in your small pile of arsenal towards your real life and truly living. Halfway into the second month you will find you have a new collections of paradigms that are kind to yourself and grow your life in ways that helps you free it from ED.

Remind yourself that in a year you will have changed 24 thoughts and 12 habits!!

What could your life be like then?

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**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](mailto:kcservices@shaw.ca) or visit her website at [www.karencookcounselling.com](http://www.karencookcounselling.com)

# Breaking Free from the Eating Disorder Voice

By Andrea Roe



While I struggled with my eating disorder, I often wondered whether I would ever be able to silence this toxic voice in my head, which was telling me I was not worthy, I was not beautiful, I was fat, and to punish myself. It was like a non-stop negative tape recorder in my head.

And for years, **I had mistaken this voice for my own true self.** I thought they were one and the same—that I was the eating disorder. I didn't know who I was without it. I had forgotten.

Then I started my path to recovery.

I learned that the eating disorder takes on its own personified identity and then tries to convince you that the disorder is you. It can be difficult to see where one starts and one ends.

With lots of work, patience, and persistence, **I learned how to separate my own true self from the eating disorder voice.** It was difficult, especially in the beginning, because my own voice was so small that I had trouble hearing it. The eating disorder was so loud and dominant.

I started to pay more and more attention to my own voice. Even when I was not able to do what it told me, I did my best to **acknowledge** it, and was **thankful** whenever I heard it was still there. I also slowly started to talk back to the eating disorder voice. I didn't want to be a slave to it any longer.

I found that the eating disorder voice started to grow weaker over time from neglect. The less I paid attention to it and more to my own voice, the stranger the eating disorder voice became. Over time, this toxic presence felt "sick" and out of place. And eventually, it faded away. **Today, the eating disorder voice is gone.**

***The same can happen for you.***

In the meantime, it is important to nurture your true you, your real voice. In the beginning, it can be difficult to tell these two voices apart—yours and the eating disorder's. That's why whenever you hear your own voice speaking, it is important to **embrace** it, **celebrate** it, **trust** it, and give it **room to grow**.

It took time to develop the eating disorder, and it takes time to break free from it. But the important thing to remember is that **breaking free from the eating disorder IS possible.**

It's one day at a time. One step at a time. But these small steps add up to make a HUGE difference. Each of these baby steps brings us closer to recovery and a life free of ED (your eating disorder).

All the best and take good care of yourself,

*Andrea*

# How Are You Doing?

By Ilissa Banhazl, MFT



Eating disorders are tough. They tend to isolate people and make them feel shameful and guilty about their secretive behaviors and their concern for their health issues.

It is important to find a “safe person.” A safe person is someone who will not judge you and will listen with empathy and support. I believe in privacy, but if you can think of one person that you trust or feel sure enough to take a small risk and share about yourself, I suggest you try.

You might tell a friend, your partner, a therapist, someone from your church/temple—anyone you choose. Remember, you’re looking for someone who won’t judge you. You will feel so much better when you can feel the love and support from another person!

Together you and this person might gather information about getting help. Perhaps you are already in counseling and this can be your “safe person” outside of counseling.

**It’s okay to be who you are and where you’re at right now**, even if you don’t like it very much. There are reasons to be explored regarding why, and new understandings to gain and new choices to make. But give yourself a break! In fact, give yourself a hug. I’m serious, wrap your arms around yourself and hold it long and tight. Tell yourself, I love you just the way you are... Feel good? Do it once a day. I bet you’re much kinder to others than you are to yourself!

**You’re a good person and you most likely don’t give yourself enough credit for the things that you do well.** Make yourself a list of the things that you like about yourself. I am going to leave you with a list of affirmations that you can print and post around your house this week. Good luck!

## Affirmations to Post on Your Fridge

1. My worth as a person is not diminished in any way by my body size or my eating patterns.
2. I will love myself no matter what my eating patterns are.
3. I will judge my days not by what or how much I eat, but by what I have accomplished and by the love I have given.
4. My life is a gift, and I will not let my enjoyment of it be diminished by feeling guilty over my body size or how much I eat.
5. I am finished blaming others, situations, and myself for the way I eat. I will take action minute by minute, hour by hour, and day by day until I can eat normally again.
6. My eating disorder is a temporary condition in my life.
7. There is a normal eater within me. I will let her/him take over my life more and more each day as I am ready.
8. I can imagine a life without an eating disorder.
9. When I feel stressed, I will close my eyes and picture how my all-powerful normal eater would handle the situation.
10. I believe I will be a normal eater again. I *know* I will be a normal eater again!

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For more information about Ilissa Banhazl and her work, visit her websites at [www.eatingdisordersgroup.com](http://www.eatingdisordersgroup.com) and <http://www.ilissabanhazlmft.com>, and her blog at <http://eatingdisorderhelpglendora.blogspot.com>.

You can also connect with her on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/ilissa.mft>), Twitter (<http://twitter.com/therapyglendora>) and YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/ilissabanhazlmft>).

Source Affirmations: [www.something-fishy.org](http://www.something-fishy.org)



MentorCONNECT Teleconference Series Presents:

**From Victim to Eating Disorders Survivor**  
**Full recovery is possible!**

**You are invited to attend a FREE teleconference with Jeanette Henriques.**

In this teleconference, we welcome Jeanette Henriques. Jeanette's powerful personal story of transformation from feeling victimized by life and her eating disorder to taking on the challenge of achieving full recovery and life fulfillment is a daily inspiration to all those who meet her. Jeanette will spend the evening with us sharing what worked to turn her from an eating disorder victim into a survivor, a thriver, a leader, and a passionate activist for the role personal choice plays in our recovery success.



**Jeanette Henriques** is living life without an eating disorder after over 15 years of struggling. Throughout the course of her journey she struggled with anorexia, bulimia, depression and post traumatic stress disorder. However, today she travels around talking to children, adolescents and adults sharing her experience. Not only does she let people know that it is possible to move beyond disordered eating but that it is possible to move beyond your past. Jeanette counsels and mentors those with eating disorders as well as victims of abuse. Her message to all those that struggle is one of hope and acceptance and encourages people to work towards their dreams because anything is possible.

When: Wednesday, April 13<sup>th</sup> 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 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](http://www.mentorconnect-ed.org)

**Relationships Replace Eating Disorders**



**“Relationships Replace Eating Disorders” with Shannon Cutts:**

## **“Relationships Replace Eating Disorders.”**

*What does that mean, exactly?*

We form a relationship with our eating disorder that serves as a source of support when life feels overwhelming. Our relationship with our eating disorder stays simple when other relationships get complicated. We trust our eating disorder—even when it lies, lets us down, tricks or double-crosses us, we still struggle to forget our first impression that it is a powerful and reliable means to a desired outcome.

It took me seven years before I began to perceive that my relationship with **my eating disorder was killing off everything in my life that was worth living for**. By then, I had few other relationships in my life, and I had almost forgotten what it felt like to be known, loved, and accepted by another human being.

When I met my first mentor, Annie, I was in very desperate circumstances. I had lost my college scholarship, my music career was effectively over due to extensive hand injuries, and no one around me had any idea what to do with me—least of all me. Annie entered my life at a time when I was so desperate for help that I was actually willing to let a stranger get close to me. My decision to let Annie see **behind the mask** into my secret and painful world was what saved my life.

Annie believed in me before I believed in myself. She believed I could get better and recapture my passion for music—and through music my passion for living life. She reminded me of what it felt like to be known, seen, and loved. And once I remembered what that felt like, **I no longer wanted the “love” the eating disorder was offering.**

And that is why, in my experience at least, **relationships replace eating disorders**. Ultimately, we are seeking a strong, nurturing connection with ourselves, but it is very difficult to go from total dependence on our eating disorder to an inner connection that is self-sustaining. Most often we get there through the “mirror” that relationships with other people who love us provide. I didn’t learn to love myself by “just doing it”—I learned from allowing Annie to love me, noticing how that love made me feel (as opposed to how listening to the eating disorder voice made me feel) and then attempting to evoke that same feeling of being loved and cared for in my way of relating to myself.

It was a long, slow, process. But seeing how steadfastly Annie stuck by me even when I would relapse and get worse, even when I was having really bad days, and even when I totally lost hope, was what taught me what unconditional love looks and acts like. One day I realized that I didn’t know how to be there for myself like that, and that was the day I became determined to learn.

Today I have learned how to befriend myself as Annie first befriended me. I still have really hard days sometimes—days when life throws all kinds of surprises at me, and days when I say and do things I wish I could take back. But through it all, instead of turning against myself, I now can stay standing by my own side, reminding myself that we will get through this the same way we get through everything.....

**Together.**

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](http://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](http://www.key-to-life.com)



# Heal Your Relationship with Food Book Giveaway

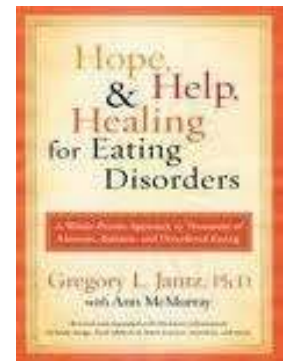
This month you have the chance to win a copy of Dr. Gregory Jantz's updated and revised book, *Hope, Help & Healing for Eating Disorders*.

*(courtesy of The Center for Counseling and Health Resources in WA)*

## About *Hope, Help & Healing for Eating Disorders*

### A Whole-Person Approach to Treatment of Anorexia, Bulimia, and Disordered Eating

Eating disorders and disordered eating ravage and consume too many lives. In this powerful book for individuals suffering from eating disorders—as well as those wanting to help—Dr. Gregory Jantz comes alongside his readers with a well-tested and successful approach that addresses the emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual dimensions of healing from an eating disorder.



Topics include:

- ✓ How to let go of anger, fear, and guilt
- ✓ Tools for creating a binge-free life
- ✓ How to keep from being a victim of others
- ✓ The role of emotional and verbal abuse in eating disorders

**You can do more than just survive—you can really live!**

## How to enter the contest...

Simply send an email to [giveaway@youarenotalonebook.com](mailto:giveaway@youarenotalonebook.com)  
and put “Heal” in the subject line.

The drawing will be held on **April 15<sup>th</sup>**  
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.”

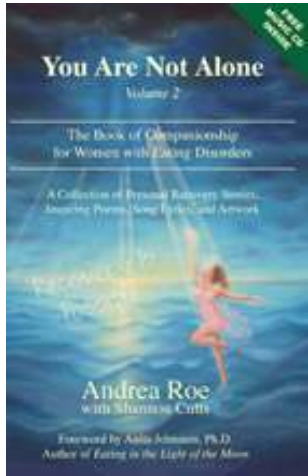
– **Ashley P. from BC, Canada**, is in recovery from anorexia. She encourages others to find their voice, and never give up on themselves.

**“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](http://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!!!**”

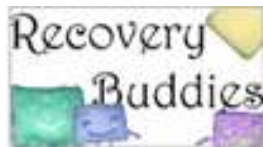
—**Kara R, 20, from Australia.**



***You Are Not Alone, Volume 2 + Free Companion CD is available at***  
[www.youarenotalonebook.com/youarenotalonevol2.php](http://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](mailto: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! 😊**