

I've been where you are. I've stood in your shoes. I know what it's like to wrestle with the all-consuming thoughts battling weight, food, and body. I understand the struggles, the ups and downs, the highs and lows, and the ins and outs of all-over-the-place eating.

There is a way out. A way that will lead you to a happier, freer, saner existence.

# On the outside I appeared to be thriving...



I guess it began sometime in high school. I gained some weight and became really uncomfortable in my body. I wanted to be thinner, I wanted to feel at ease in myself, and I wanted the insecurity I felt deep inside to go away.

I used food even then, as early as I can remember. I would binge to deal with my emotions and things that a high school-er deals with. Parental expectations, peer pressure, wanting to fit in, and any situation that came up that I didn't know how handle.

On a whim, I decided I wanted to buy diet pills and lose weight for the upcoming school prom. I lost about 25 pounds in two months and everyone complimented me on how great I looked.

**And so began the diet pill addiction, the binging and dieting cycle, and the spiral down into the depths of an eating disorder.**

I lived almost half my life in either the binge or restrict mode, and I didn't know it was possible to eat "normally". I repeatedly gained and lost weight, each time more drastic than the last.

I went off to college and struggled with depression, anxiety, disordered eating, and body issues. Towards the end of college, I was taking almost half a bottle of diet pills a day. I hated my body and myself. I thought all of my problems would be fixed if I was thinner.

My whole life revolved around food: thinking about not eating, debating what I was going to eat, struggling with what I couldn't eat and deciding how I would then exercise to work off the food I did eat.

**These thoughts were consuming my entire life. It was eating away at my soul and breaking down my spirit.**

I just couldn't bear the burden anymore of keeping this to myself, and yet it was something I hid well from others. On the outside, I appeared to be thriving. I was a straight-A student, played varsity sports, grew up in a loving family environment, and had lots of close friends.

**Yet, inside, I was miserable, I hated myself, and thoughts of dieting consumed my life.**

I would seem to "recover" and then slip dangerously back into old eating disorder patterns. No amount of weight loss was ever good enough. The weight loss/weight gain, binge/diet cycle seemed like a roller coaster I could not get off of...

## **Thankfully, my life is completely different now...**

I'm happier and healthier than I've ever been!

As I began to live a life more true to myself, being more active, spending more time outside, and pursuing my passions, the weight has fallen away, gradually and naturally. **The days of focusing my entire life on food, weight, and my body are long gone. Those debilitating, obsessive thoughts aren't the central part of my life as it was before.**

When I look back at my journey to where I am now, one thing I know for sure is that an eating disorder is a spiritual journey. Each step of the way allowed me to become more authentic in who I truly am. I had to let go of perfectionism, of thinking I wasn't good enough, of suppressing my heart's desires (and learn what a "heart's desire" even meant).

I had to release society's expectations and of following a life path I didn't want. In addition to being free from the binge/restrict cycle, the food/weight obsession, and the battle to lose weight, I learned how to be myself, listen to my body, follow my intuition, and live an authentic life in the process.