

Change the Narrative:

An interview with Amy Kathleen Lee about her experience with the Share My Story Initiative

These past few months have been an exciting chapter in the legacy of Dancing with ED as we have explored the impact of sharing our stories on recovery, our connections with others, and our communities' view of eating disorders.

I had the privilege of interviewing Amy Kathleen Lee, the founder of Dancing With ED, in preparation for this series. We discussed her journey through her trials as a pre-professional ballet dancer to her present work as a mental health educator. She now uses her story to destigmatize eating disorders, educate communities about their prevalence, and most importantly, create relationships with dancers so that no one has to struggle alone.

I hope to provide you with the gold nuggets of our conversation with the intent to communicate the positive effects of sharing your story and perhaps encourage you to open up about your own.

Amy began by explaining how her story has morphed over time. She said that with each recounting of her journey, she discovers a new layer of significance that helps her to comb out both the contributors to her condition and the crucial moments of healing throughout her life. One of these moments that she shared with me was her current experience writing and editing her upcoming book, and specifically when her editor suggested that she dive deeper into her past. She responded along the lines of, What do you mean? I dove deep. I imagine him raising an eyebrow as he proposed to Amy that she interview her family members about the topics within her memoir.

Amy described how she was slightly taken aback by his suggestion, but she accepted his advice and ended up unearthing the root causes of her pain. She told me that she considers this moment a pivotal time of self-discovery, where the decision to share her struggles resulted in her life's story coming full circle. She began to see all of the signs, moments, and people that led her through her journey to recovery.

One of the moments that she shared particularly inspired me. I asked her if she could remember a distinct moment when she decided that it was time to recover. She recounted her experience in the hospital after surviving suicide, when she realized that if she was going to be alive, she would live freely, with no fear. She had to choose to fight for freedom and joy all the way. In that moment, she resolved to leave behind the darkness and everything and everyone that no longer served her or contributed to her healing. She said it was the most difficult decision she ever made, but it was also the wisest, as she never would have recovered otherwise.

Eventually, she was able to open up about this experience. It took time, she said. It took courage, but the act of sharing felt like she was relinquishing her burdens, pulling them off of her shoulders, out of her heart and releasing them into the world. She explained how it is a vulnerable place to be, as her story is no longer fully hers, but the reward is infinitely worth it.

Now her story is a tool of a sort. She can use it to connect with dancers, help them to feel less alone, and be the support that she needed when she was struggling. Amy said that the community built from this network of sharing makes it all worth it. She likened it to a tapestry--we can weave together our stories, turn the tangled mess of disordered eating into a beautiful picture of resilience and strength. Your story is worth telling. It is unique to you and you never know who it may resonate with, who it may help to heal.

I hope that this interview of ours was able to contribute something valuable to the conversation. If you would like to hear more about how you can share your story, please reach out to Amy Kathleen Lee. Whether it is a small piece of your journey, or an in-depth analysis, it is all worth sharing, and it may benefit you in ways you didn't expect.

Amy and I are still discovering this, even after years of reflection, and we continue to be surprised by the power of telling a story. She mentioned to me after our Instagram Live interview, "Something I didn't realize about doing the interviews, is the impact it would have on the person being interviewed, and their loved ones. You received such a beautiful response from your family which brought me to tears. What we are doing spreads hope. Hope has a ripple effect powerful enough to change lives."

May this bring you hope.

About the Author:

Hello hello! My name is Taylor Ferreira. I am a current student at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo working towards a Bachelor's of Science in Nutrition with the goal of becoming a Registered Dietitian. I am interested (for the moment) in working with eating disorder recovery patients or with new mothers as a Lactation Consultant.

I have wanted to study nutrition since my early high school education. I was a company ballet dancer for many years, and I was fascinated with how something as simple as eating could have such a profound effect on my performance, aesthetic, and mental health. I am excited for the opportunity to share some of the knowledge that has helped me to improve my relationship with food in hopes that it can do the same for you.