

forced to stand on a pair of scales and my family laughing at me. I was still rather happy-go-lucky at that stage, but three years later I decided to take control of my life. I wanted to show them all that I was good at something and that I could be successful at something. I wanted to be the slimmest of all my friends. I wanted to be tiny, I simply had had enough of my size back then and thought that it was time for a radical change. I began cutting back on food and soon enough I lost a phenomenal amount of weight. My parents, and especially my father, forced me to break my dieting and it was with this force of pressure to eat that I turned to vomiting to try and fool him. I needed to control something in my life and that was my intake and weight. My father was also very dominating back then. I was beaten beyond what is considered acceptable discipline for a child to endure. I had no freedom and I felt suffocated, so my eating disorder was also a struggle of power interplay between my father and me. I needed autonomy and I needed to live my life and be the author of my own destiny.

The years to 14-16 at school were very difficult because my eating disorder was in full swing. I lived in my own world as most eating disordered people do. I was quite popular during this time despite my eating disorder and I had quite a lot of friends; but in many ways I was a joker and I put up a tough exterior in an attempt to protect my fragile mind and to try and stop people from further hurting me.



That is the brief story of the start of my eating disorder.

Through the years my eating disorder has worsened and my physical and mental health have taken a battering. I have been admitted to several specialized eating disorders units for refeeding attempts and my heart has been put on heart pumps at my lowest point, 50lbs at 5ft6 inches tall. I also now have long term heart problems as a direct result of my ED. I have never had a boyfriend, still a virgin, and I have no real prospects and I have no 'real' friends in my "real" life, I am very withdrawn now. All my IP experiences have been traumatic. I have been compulsory detained in hospital under Section 3 on many occasions. I have also absconded from all of many IP stays. This has happened because it is very difficult for me to allow my weight to be elevated above a level that I can cope with. No eating disorder unit has been able to give me back my life. A friend of mine referred to me as being a "lifer" and I cried because I feared this was true. I am saddened that it has come to this. I privately shed my own tears over this. I often do not cry outwardly (I am too emotionally detached to cry outwardly mostly, though I do cry through the language that is my eating disorder. I shed tears inwardly over this because I once had dreams, and I loved life at one stage and I cry that now my voice is now mute. I feel like I am like a bird in a cage who is trapped and cannot get out. That is how that I can best describe how I feel.

Some problems as a black eating-disordered woman that I have experienced and do constantly have to deal with are the need to validate that yes, I do have anorexia (although most days I think that I am too fat for the classification and feel like there is nothing wrong with me even at an emaciated weight) and that I am not merely copying anybody else! I have been told in Inpatient refeeding stays by black nurses why I have this disorder is because I am copying white girls. I am not copying anybody. I am me. It is very painful when people tell me this, because they are, in effect, denying my suffering and my experiences. My disorder has cost me very dearly in my own life, so to deny and to not recognize the root causes of my problems is very painful. It is like I suffered and am suffering for no real reason. and that it is my own fault, although with confirmed negativity disorder I tend to blame myself anyway. My parents are also ashamed of my eating disorder although they have become more accepting of it over the years and they now do all they can to help me through spirituality and endless compassion. An eating disorder is just not something that they 'do' in their culture, or so they say. My parents do not like the mental health profession and have fought against sections for me by refusing to give their consent to the section. My parents are also thankful that I am not really 'mental' and that I should just get myself together and sort myself out with the help of god, as if it is that easy (my parents classify an eating disorder as a more acceptable mental illness). I would also add that because of the social stigma that being detained under the mental health can bring and because of my parents' religious beliefs, my parents choose to believe that God can/will cure my ED and not the mental health profession, another very common trait that I have found that is shared amongst other black women with eating disorders. After my first edu admission, my parents seemed to believe that their treatment was better than psychiatric treatment, and short of medical emergency my parents do not truly believe that the medical profession can help me or either cure me. That is god's domain, or so they say.

Today in the here and now my eating disorder has become my way of coping and it is now very much my dangerous lifestyle while at the same time a very damaging mental illness. My eating disorder began long before I even knew what an eating disorder was. I have just had to drop out of my studies again because of my eating disorder. I didn't want to write a piece that blamed anybody because I do not. I have totally forgiven everybody who caused me suffering intentionally or unintentionally. I do not bear malice, so some things in my life cannot be talked about without dredging up the past and that has the power to hurt a lot of people and I am past that. Funny now that my family seems to give me more of the love that I wanted back then now that I am "sick." In many ways I am still very much that little girl that I was back then, the little girl who yearned for love and the need to be looked after. In my mind I also think that my family, especially my father, will cease to love me as much if I am again big, and I am constantly tortured by the thoughts of people hurting me when I was chubby, so I never ever want to go there again. In terms of my future I fear it so much and I believe deep down that I will never have a future. The future just does not look good for me. It has been seventeen years of persistent hell now and I am starting to get tired of my life but cannot/will not force a change for some reason. I wish that I could write something more positive but I just cannot, I am sorry. I am disabled now as a direct result of my eating disorder and my outlook is not fixated on recovery although I wish that for everybody who suffers from a ed. One cannot give up entire hope though as there is god and with god then comes hope. However, at present my life is dominated by my eating disorder and I am but a shell of my former self. An eating disorder is the worst thing that has ever happened to me because it has taken away my voice and it has put a halt to my emotional and life development. I wouldn't wish my life on my worst enemy (although I have no enemies in reality). Thank you for listening to my story.