

I WAS SPIRALLING OUT OF CONTROL

I don't have many memories from my childhood, but the memories I do have relate to food - picnics with bacon and egg pie, my mother's home cooking, Sunday bread. I was never much of a sweet tooth, but instead I preferred savouries, pastries, breads and the like. I grew up on a farm and food was plentiful and was never restricted and I lived a pretty healthy, active lifestyle.

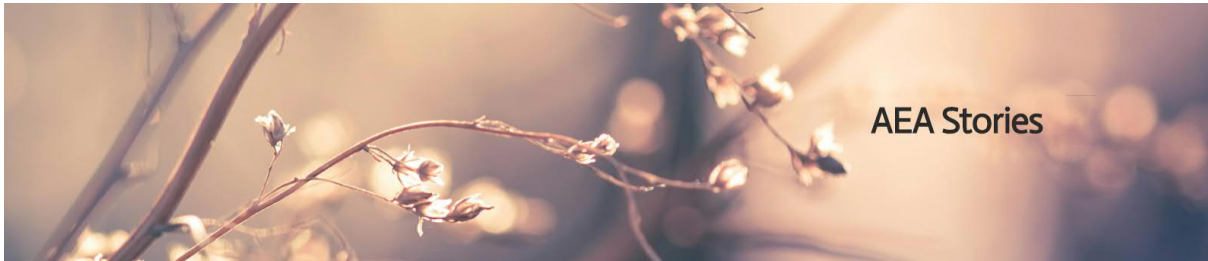
Once I hit my teenage years, however, I remember starting to get worried about my weight. (I'll just mention here that I don't think I have ever been overweight and I certainly wasn't overweight as a teenager). I'm not sure how this all came about, but it was around the time I started getting interested in boys and my body was changing. I would stare at myself in the mirror and think I was fat.

My disease first started to manifest itself in me with exercise. Now, I was not interested in sports at all and was no good at sports or running or anything athletic. However, I started to exercise as a way to lose weight and to change the way I looked.

From the age of about fourteen years old and over the next ten to fifteen years, I participated in jogging, weight training, aerobics, swimming, and cycling. I completed many triathlons and even completed a half marathon. The only reason I did all of this was to lose weight and change the way I looked - nothing else. I did not care about my health or being fit or anything like that, it was just to control my weight and change how I looked. Looking back, I can see that even from quite a young age I was not okay with me, how I looked or anything about me actually. My disease then manifested in me through dieting and restricting my food intake.

I went on my first diet when I was about seventeen years old. By this stage, I was regularly going to the gym and doing weight training and aerobics classes. I was convinced I was fat, so I went to a dietician who put me on a diet to lose weight. I probably managed to lose a couple of kilos, I can't really remember. But what I do remember about that time was how extreme I would be with any sort of weight loss programme I undertook. I would have to follow it to the letter and couldn't deviate from it. It was like a matter of life and death for me.

This first diet started my destructive dieting/exercise behaviour that would continue right up until I came into recovery. I would either be on some sort of dieting or restrictive eating regime and be sort of okay in myself, or I would be just eating and depressed and hating myself. My weight would fluctuate a bit and I have caused irreparable damage to my insides with my eating.



Some of the different eating behaviours I have used include missing meals - so for a period of time, when I was at university, I would only eat breakfast and dinner. I can remember being able to only eat breakfast at one point, but that was during the summer and I was drinking a lot (I am also a recovering alcoholic). I have also cut out meat, fats, sauces and gravies at different times. I never ate butter - ever. Any milk I consumed had to be trim or I wouldn't drink it. I remember as a kid that I told my mother that I did not like gravy on my meat for dinner or pudding after dinner. What kid doesn't like gravy or pudding?!!

I used to think that really thin people (anorexic) looked attractive and so wished I could be that thin, but the problem was that I always had to eat. I could have all these strict eating rules in place, but eventually I would have to eat. This would make me hate myself even more than I already did.

Over the years my disease progressed, it got harder and harder to control my eating and weight. When I got pregnant with my first child, I thought 'Great, now I can eat what I like and it doesn't matter because I'll just lose it when the baby is born'. I gained a huge amount of weight and it didn't come off when my daughter was born. I then proceeded to continue to gain weight while breastfeeding because I could not stop eating. I eventually weaned her and went to Weight Watchers and lost the weight.

With my second pregnancy I went to Weight Watchers throughout my pregnancy, to try to prevent the massive weight gain. When my third daughter was born, I could not lose the weight. By this stage I had lost the ability to be able to stay on a diet.

Once I started to have a family, I found it hard to exercise. I also suffered with depression. Things started to spiral out of control and, through a series of events, I ended up in recovery. I have had to deal with my eating addiction, as well other addictions. I have found that in order to get well from the disease of addiction, I have had to deal with all of my addictions. While I continue to use something, I will not be able to get well and will continue to get sicker from this disease.

Today, many years later, I have a good life, free from my addictions. I am healthy, have a peace of mind and, most importantly, I am okay with being me. I thank the God of my understanding for my recovery and for the wonderful people that have helped me along the way.