

IN THE TRENCHES: THE TRUE STORY OF A GIRL WHO FOUGHT ANOREXIA

By BONNIE BRIGGS

One out of every 100 young women between 10 and 20 are starving themselves.

Jamie's (NOT HER REAL NAME) problems first stemmed from massive fights between her mother and father. She felt so upset at the sound of them screaming at each other that it was easier to get that sick feeling out by throwing up.

She was six.

Soon, things spiraled into not eating any food at all. Since the family rarely sat down to meals, it was easy to throw the food to the dog. It started to get scary when, "I tried to take a drink of orange juice, [and] less than ten seconds later I was spitting it back out."

Her mother realized her daughter had stopped eating and she responded by trying to force Jamie* to eat.

She tried to grasp her daughter by the throat and stuff food down her mouth. Understandably, the food came right back up. Jamie* was taken to the hospital for dehydration. Her veins had shrunk

so much that the nurse had to stick a needle in her arm five times before finding anything. Doctors said the problem was due to a traveling stomach virus.

In her own words: "I had caught another break." The normal weight a six years old child is 45 pounds, she weighed 25.

"After that my parents got along better. They united on the basis that their baby girl needed help."

She stopped making herself ill. However, at seven, she had broken bones in two different areas because her skeletal structure was greatly weakened by not having the right nutrition. Nonetheless, things were going great, she recollected; she was cute and petite, weighing 98 pounds at age nine.

Increasing age meant growth she considered ugly. Entering middle school, she had a stick figure and was ashamed of her lack of blonde hair and freckles. "Then I realized I had one up on them: I was still thin."

Holding on to being thin was threatened when her weight shot up to 110 pounds. She told herself, "You're better than they are, you're thin, you're happy with who you are..." In reality, I was disgusted with myself, I wanted to vomit just looking in the mirror. I was hideous, bad hair, bad teeth, and I was gaining weight... I knew I had to do something drastic... I had to be thin; it was all I had. I came from a long proud line of beauty queens. I was the oddball, the ugly



Most teenagers look forward to lunch time as a brief period to relax and enjoy themselves. For an eating disorder sufferer, it's a stressful period surrounded by the very thing they're trying to avoid—food.

duckling, my weight was it - the only thing I had to make myself different and special. So I did what I knew would make me feel better, make me look better. I stopped eating."

The changes were horrifying. Lost weight made her ribs stick out. She was consistently ill in class. Lies now came easily at lunch time with regular excuses of "too much breakfast" or "not feeling well" or just "not hungry."

Soon her weight dropped to 94 pounds. She moved from a happy, bubbly student to a tired and non-active one. Getting sick a lot in class meant many visits to the school nurse. Teachers felt she was lazy and threatened to call in her mom.

Hating herself grew into thoughts of suicide. On the other hand, she considered her condition a slow form of suicide anyway.

"I had hit bottom. Every time I had gone to my home doctor, they passed off my symptoms as something else. The blood I coughed up was from my raw throat, not by regurgitated stomach acid. It was a simple viral infection that could be solved with an antibiotic. The heart palpitations that became a desperate cry for help from my weakened body were simple 'growing pains.' It wasn't until November when my 84 pound

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EATING DISORDER TEST

For yourself or someone you know, please rate your response to the following statements:

1 - Often; 2 - Sometimes;

3 - Rarely; 4 - Never

I feel proud of my thinness.

I weigh myself often.

I have fasted.

I fear becoming fat.

I feel fat, even though friends and family say I'm not.

I feel the need to exercise every day.

I enjoy preparing meals for others but eat little myself.

I've eaten in binges. (A lot at one time very quickly)

I like and anticipate eating alone.

I eat even when I'm not hungry.

I eat sensibly in front of others but not when I'm alone.

I've made repeated attempts to diet or restrict my eating.

I feel self-conscious or embarrassed about my eating behaviors.

I sneak food when no one's around.

I have lied about the amount of food I eat.

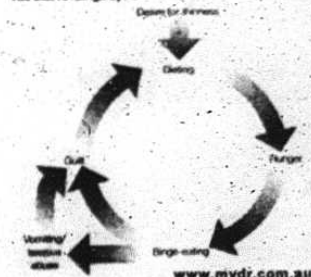
I have vomited/made myself vomit after eating or binge-eating.

I have used laxative, diet pills, appetite suppressants or diuretics to control my weight.

I panic if I gain a couple of pounds.

complete and score your quiz on page 15

The starve-binge cycle



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