



MY FRIEND'S *Secret* STRUGGLE

When I realized my friend had an eating disorder, I wanted to help but didn't know what to do.

By Janelle Bagley

We live in a world of image, a world of perfection. The media tell women to lose more weight, wear higher heels, and exploit ourselves to get ahead. In this world, some women cry, hurt, and even hate themselves for who they cannot be. The world's view of women has become distorted, undoubtedly by Satan's influence. So many women and young women of this world have forgotten their true and great worth, unable to find the light that our Heavenly Father has placed in each of us. I believe that every woman has a strong, beautiful light inside of her that can change lives, including her own. And we can help one another see that light.

That's what I was able to do with a friend, someone whom I considered to be the most beautiful, confident, and intelligent young woman I knew. We'd been friends for years, but it wasn't until high school that I discovered she had an eating

disorder. One day during a psychology class, we had an entire lesson on eating disorders—why and how people become consumed by them. During this lesson my friend was unusually quiet and looked uncomfortable. That's when I first began to suspect her “internal dispute,” as we later referred to it.

After that class, I began to notice that my friend's normal behaviors were not so normal—things like her lack of appetite, her comments about how she looked fat, or the constant facade of perfection she was trying to keep up. I became really scared for her and decided to fast and pray for her—I didn't know what else to do.

Eventually, the Spirit told me I needed to talk to her with great love. I did the best I could and fasted and prayed that I would know what to say to her. When I finally talked with her about my suspicion of an eating disorder, we both cried as she admitted to having one. She told me she knew she was struggling and didn't know how to help herself—or if she

HELP FOR EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders can be difficult to overcome, but resources are available to help. Talk to parents and local Church leaders to find support in your community. That may include regular visits with medical professionals and also the bishop, who can provide great help.

even wanted to change. I was so surprised that she didn't deny having an eating disorder. The Spirit was definitely with us during that conversation. With the assistance of parents and counselors, we found help for her. And through those efforts, she's now healthy again.

Helping her rediscover her worth was one of the best things I've ever had the opportunity to do. I knew she has great worth. She is an extremely special person—she just forgot how much worth she has. I wanted her to see herself the way Christ sees her, and along the way she showed me that I needed to do the same for myself. **NE**

Janelle Bagley lives in California, USA.

Additional Stories

Read the stories of two young women who struggled with and recovered from an eating disorder:

Emma's story: lds.org/go/EmmaNE7.

Katie's story: lds.org/go/KatieNE7.

WARNING SIGNS

If you're concerned that you or a loved one might be struggling with an eating disorder, look for some of these signs:

- Abuse of laxatives, diuretics, enemas, diet pills, or other related medications
- A change in weight not related to a medical condition
- Severe dieting, binge eating, or preoccupation with food
- Intense fear of being “fat”
- Evidence of forced vomiting
- Distorted body image, preoccupation with body shape and size
- Obsessive or excessive exercise
- Depressed mood or anxiety

By Lynn Carol Maynes, LDS Family Services