

When Food Becomes Your Idol

After 26 years of battling several types of eating disorders, I was on the verge of giving up on help and hope. I'd just eaten 15 Oreo cookies, a half gallon of chocolate ice cream topped with whip cream and chocolate syrup, then 12 donut holes. I ran to the bathroom and began making myself vomit.

Standing over the toilet I was shaking, feeling guilty, ashamed and out of control. I literally felt like I wanted to die. This was a major set-back for me. It had been eight months since my last bulimic episode and I was doing so well after intense counseling.

I didn't understand why I kept doing the things I didn't want to do over and over. I didn't understand why I couldn't be normal and enjoy food, eating like everyone else. This was a deep, dark and extremely painful moment in my life when I hit absolute rock bottom. In that place, I was sitting on the bathroom floor, mascara streaming down my face, sobbing sounds eluding as I tried to muffle them.

Feelings of desperation no one could comfort ran through my being. But in that moment, something hit me in a profound way. I saw something happening to me physically, mentally and spiritually. Knowledge went from my head to my heart, and God gave me an epiphany.

There I was, just God and me. The revelation was: Food was my idol. I ran to food for comfort when I needed something to soothe my anxiety, pain or negative emotions. I trusted food more than God. Food wasn't the answer to my problems, but it was my drug, my addiction—my quick fix.

My addiction to food began early in my childhood when I thought food was my friend. Food helped me feel better, or maybe just different. It took me to a temporary place which made everything bad vanish (but just for awhile). I felt so

happy when I caught a delightful whiff of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.

At first, I just wanted a bite. Something sweet to satisfy. One bite, two and three weren't enough. I needed MORE. I tried to stop but went back. I shoved them into my mouth, quickly chewing, while a sugar rush caused a surge in my body feeling like a drug pushed into my veins. The gratification was immediate. My hands were shaking and I felt euphoria.

Ironically, no matter how much I ate, it was never enough. No matter what sweets promised, they always disappointed. Like a fool, I kept going back for the pleasure. Infatuated, I was clinging onto foolish reasoning to experience impractical passion. I was sucked in, stuck and headfirst in an abusive relationship with food.

To be transparent, there existed a time when I believed sweets were better than sex. It's a silly thought, but let me explain. Food and I had an intimate relationship.

I never let any other positive or sensual emotions over-ride. With food, I was safe. Cookies, candy, cake, ice-cream and sugar provided everything I needed without asking for anything in return. I didn't have to do anything to deserve it either. It was all mine whenever I *needed* it. And I add emphasis on *needed* it.

Most of the time, I didn't just want it. I needed it to make me feel better or good. I needed it to calm me down, numb my negative feelings and keep me from dealing with situations. If I were indulging in excessive amounts of sweets, nothing else mattered.

I blocked out the world and feasted. It created escapism. Sweets kept me from having to feel what I was really experiencing inside. My feelings were too much for me to handle and explore. They controlled and overwhelmed me.

The problem with eating disorders is this: Most of us know we have a problem. We don't know why or how to fix it. And even if we do have answers, an addiction is always hard to accept and overcome. Sometimes we can reveal our feelings and actions and talk about our pain. We can't, however, defeat this monster named "ED" (Eating Disorder) alone!

Regardless of the good times I had with food, when I overate or binged and purged it created negative emotions and bad feelings inside me. Some were guilt, shame, worry, anxiety and fear. Since I refused to live with those feelings, I had to do something to make them go away.

There were two options for me: purging in the toilet or excessive exercising. After I purged I felt horrible; I was left emotionally exhausted and suffered a sore throat, a red and puffy face, along with stomach pains. When I over-exercised for up to two hours on the treadmill, I was physically and mentally exhausted. One wrong thought led to consecutive wrong thoughts and irrational actions.

My struggle with food hindered me in my walk and closeness with God. Guilt was a constant foe. When I felt guilty it was difficult for me to want to spend time with a perfect, forgiving and loving God. It's hard to accept grace when we don't feel like we deserve it. But that's just it, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast" (Eph. 2: 8-9). God's grace and mercy is a free gift we choose to receive.

I'm learning to change my position in life from kneeling over the toilet, to kneeling in prayer. I need God a whole lot more than I need to binge and purge. This is where the journey of healing begins.

Brooke Lynn's new book, *Raised by Strangers* is available in all formats on Amazon and Barnes and Nobles. *Raised by Strangers* is

Brooke Lynn's story of her 26 year battle, struggles and recovery with eating disorders.