

INSIGHT

I've tried, but I can't seem to remember the first time. I know it started the summer after I graduated from high school. The following September, I went away to college and it was there I learned that I wasn't the only one who ate all I wanted...and more...and never gained weight. How?!? People used to ask how I could eat so much and not get fat. I would casually answer, "Oh, you have to burn it off; be active," and/or "I have a high metabolism." Of course, no one doubted me because I was involved in every sport and club there was, worked part time, and was a 4.0 student.

Anyway, as I was saying, I learned I wasn't the only one who could do that. There was this other girl that dorned and everyone knew how she kept her weight down. After lunch and dinner, she would go into the restrooms and stick her fingers down her throat until she vomited. The only difference between myself and her was--no one ever knew I threw up. My roommate worked in the kitchen, so I had the room to myself after meals. After binging and throwing up so many months and so many times a day (one to five), you get it down to a science. You know when to eat...when no one is around... and you learn what to eat... things that are easy to throw up. For me, that meant to stay away from peanut butter, tuna fish, and oatmeal, just for examples. Meats and carbohydrates and loads of liquids were great. Another thing I never knew was this ordeal I was putting myself through even had a name. The first time I heard anything resembling it, I was in my second year of college and going through a *Psychology Today* magazine. There was a half-page article about Ruminantion. I looked it up and the word meant, "to chew again what has slightly been chewed and regurgitated." This was the only article I was to find for a few years. One slight insight into the

problem, I was beginning to realize, was part of my life.

The next encounter I had with a mention of any eating disorder was the term bulimia. I was a bulimic. I had a disease. I knew very well what I was doing wasn't "normal," but I couldn't stop, or rather, I didn't want to stop. It was great being able to eat anything I wanted and not gain weight, and no one but me knew the secret. It was my secret.

Time passed, and my eating began to consume more of my time. I would wake up and plan when and what I would eat. Sometimes I tried to eat as late in the day as possible, because then maybe I would vomit only once. However, it was a rare day when that happened.

Years passed, and suddenly one day I said to myself, "This is not normal; people eat three meals and snacks and maintain their weight; why can't I eat two meals and feel satisfied? Why do I feel I've pigged out and might just as well eat more and then vomit it all?" I was caught in a vicious cycle...binging, vomiting, guilt, and then it began all over again. Yes, I needed help, but who would understand what I was doing to myself? And who would help me and who could I trust?

One day I mustered up the courage to tell a family member. Well, not so directly, I wrote a letter and tried to explain the past ten years of my life. In return, I got nothing but love, support, understanding, and help. I started seeing a therapist and slowly began to understand my behavior.

It's two years later, and it has been a long, hard haul. It isn't over yet, and I have a rough road ahead of me, emotionally and physically, but I'm doing it; I'm on the right track.

--Name withheld

MONONUCLEOSIS

by Jennifer Brennan

MONO. It's one of those four letter words that when you say it, people back ten feet away and their eyes bulge out at you in horror.

Mononucleosis is not a fun disease. When I had mono, the glands in my throat were so swollen that I couldn't eat for a few days, which was okay because I couldn't stay awake long enough to eat anything anyway.

Dealing with the disease wasn't as awful as dealing with people's misconceptions of the disease. In my case, it never mattered what two physicians, a nurse, and a blood technician told me, everybody was an expert and was always right when it came to mono. Many people believe that you can contract mono from breathing the air that surrounds a mono victim; you can't. I know that every time I saw a person's face turn red from lack of oxygen because they were holding their breath, I wanted to lick their fork or drink out of their soda when they weren't looking.

For me, believe it or not, mononucleosis had its benefits. When I was sick, I could have ruled the world with my lips, forget the guns. All I had to do was threaten to kiss someone if they didn't do what I said and the world would've been mine!!!

Because it was difficult for me to eat, I lost

a lot of weight. It was great the way people would compliment me by telling me that my face looked sunken in and I looked dead. I loved the way none of my pants fit me, which meant that I had to buy a whole new wardrobe! Unfortunately, waitresses who have mono don't work; waitresses who don't work don't get paid, which means I had no money to buy a new wardrobe. I should have had my saliva patent as a diet... I'd never have to worry about money again.

When you're sick, you find out who your friends are. When you're contagious, you have no friends. I was sick a few days before I was diagnosed as having mononucleosis. As soon as my boyfriend's mother found out I had mono, she forbade me to see him until I was well again. If he didn't get it in those few days before I was diagnosed, he'd never get it ... but, hey, I wasn't going to tell her that. They say, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," which proves that they (who are they anyway?) have a cliché for every situation because they also say, "Out of sight, out of mind." Those three weeks of mono gave me a chance to see my boyfriend for what he really is ... I won't say what, but I saw it.

Mono had its benefits but I wouldn't do it again ...I can't afford another wardrobe.

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