

LOSING MYSELF

TRIGGER WARNING: EATING DISORDER

“It’s just food.”
“You’re killing yourself.”
“Is it really that hard to eat?”
“I don’t know what to do anymore. How can we help you, because we’re out of ideas?”
It was the quiet drives to the doctor’s office every two weeks for a check-in. The horrendous protein shakes that I had to chug twice a day. When I look back, these are the things that haunt me.
I no longer recognize the person I was six months ago.
“You’re skin and bones” is something nobody wants to hear. I just wanted to see myself as beautiful or pretty. But it’s easy to get lost in a sea of body shaming that you forget there’s so much more to you.
It’s hard to open up about it. The topic is too sensitive. Too personal. When it comes up, the room falls silent, and everyone looks anywhere but at me.
But today we’re gonna talk about it - that whisper in the back of your head that’s always there. It tells you not to eat. It tells you how gross you look.
“Take your shoes off and step on the scale for me”
Every time I heard those words a little part of my heart shattered, knowing I had dug myself into a 20-foot hole.
I took my coat off and walked down the hall with Dr. Lindz and slid my shoes off to step onto the scale. I was never allowed to see the result. (I’m still not allowed too.)
Stranded in a room with three doctors, I listened.
“Your body is deteriorating to nothing”
“We fear that you have pushed it too close to death.”

But death wasn’t my biggest fear. Failing those who loved me was.
How can I make you understand the physical and emotional battles recovery puts you through? Where do I even start?
How about the 3,000 calories I was supposed to eat every day?
Or getting my blood drawn every month?
Or the number of therapists I tried, that never ended up working?
My family tried to talk to me about it, but it always seemed as if they were nagging me or forcing food down my throat.
It was something I had to conquer by myself. A puzzle inside my head that only I could solve.
So I drank those awful protein shakes that tasted like the mold that grows on strawberries. I ate whatever my meal plan told me to eat whether I wanted to or not.
It wasn’t just a daily struggle - it was an hourly struggle to keep my head up.
I wondered why I let myself get to this point. My only answer was, “I thought I was being healthy.”
And just when you think you’ve conquered it all, it comes creeping back. It sends you down a spiral of mixed emotions and social norms. It only takes one word, one video, or even one person to trigger a setback that can last weeks.
Six months later, I stepped on the scale for my normal weigh-in. This time I stopped, turned around, and smiled at my mom.
“I’m so proud of you,” she said, her voice shaking.
“I love you, too,” I said, warm tears running down my face.
The war is never over, but you win a battle here and there.
Today was a win.
STORY BY MADDY GRAFF

