

With Faith and Love I Have Beaten Bulimia

Body Image and Bulimia

I am a healthy and thriving 26 year old. However, this has not been without serious challenges and complications. Ten years ago at the age of 16, I became bulimic. I had always worried about my weight and how I looked. I was often pressured by society and the weight of making sure I had a good shidduch, or match for marriage. I am a religious orthodox Jewish woman. As a younger girl I always thought I looked fat, out-of-shape, and unattractive. It did not matter what the scale read or even the compliments and encouragement of my parents, friends, family, and teachers. I felt for some reason that I had to keep my weight in strict control or my life would spin out of control. I suppose, in retrospect, when one feels that they cannot control many factors of life, this made me feel more secure.

Origins In Depression

The feeling of lack of control, even though I know, and knew at the time that G-d controls everything came from losing a dear friend when I was almost 16. This person was a friend and mentor and guide and support in my life and the loss, rather unexpected and sudden, left me grasping for control and structure where this relationship had provided such previously. Lacking strength and will and battling uncertainty and doubt I was vulnerable and depressed and began using my weight and image as one element of my life I could control with precision through bulimia. I even remember distinctly the first time I made myself throw up, on Shabbos, in order not to gain the weight from a rather large meal. These challenges, physical and spiritual, made the ensuing years an extremely hard time for me and eventually my family. My turn to food to feel more in control of my life was detrimental to my physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Thank G-d with the support of my family I have overcome bulimia.

Bulimia: The Danger, The Pain

At the times I would eat a lot of food, and usually not in extreme excess, and throw it up, it seemed like the only way I could cope. My body image and my lack of understanding what seemed like an uncontrollable life were being assuaged by bulimia. The physical pain to my body from the bulimia and the emotional pain from knowing I was involved in the practice of bulimia which is against G-d's will caused me extreme internal strife and conflict. I learned, once my condition was diagnosed, the massive danger to my short-term and long-term health. I learned I could potentially compromise my ability to bear children if my bulimia continued due to long-term damage to my reproductive systems. With this knowledge, medical intervention, and family support I am now healthy and married with two beautiful daughters.

The Signs and Symptoms

My bulimia was triggered by a low self-esteem and a traumatic loss in my life at a vulnerable age. My tendencies began to show themselves when I began my obsession with weight (though I was not considered obese or overweight by anyone in my life and likewise according to the BMI, or body mass index). I did begin to exercise more, though not excessive. Once I began to induce vomiting and as well resorted to using laxatives, I knew my problem has become more serious. I just had no idea where to turn.

My appearance and strength also changed. Due to the bulimia I noticed my teeth were becoming almost translucent, my entire body, especially my hands, were swollen, my stomach was painfully constipated and swollen, and my period was irregular or absent. After many, many months of enduring such frightening symptoms I sought intervention and assistance via a close friend.

With Support and Love

With the help from my family and closest of friends I was able to better understand my problem and gain the professional counseling and medical diagnosis and assistance necessary to help me overcome bulimia. Thank G-d bulimia did not cause any serious long-term damage to my emotional or physical states and I have and continue to be able to bear children. Should anyone reading this recognize, through my story, their own challenges are bulimia please seek help immediately as the danger is real and the pain can end with the correct support and a lot of love.

About the Author

Debra Marlow currently lives in Minnesota with her husband and two daughters. Debra has an MSW in Family and Individual Counseling and regularly helps clients suffering from eating disorders such as bulimia. Learn more about [bulimia](#).

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