

LONELINESS AND EATING DISORDERS

A story by Molly



AGED 13, MOLLY WAS DIAGNOSED WITH ANOREXIA

- Molly went into an inpatient mental health unit.
- She recalls not even being able to say "anorexia" out loud, let alone divulging her diagnosis to another person.
- She felt she couldn't tell her friends why she was missing birthdays and declining invitations to do things.



...THIS LED TO HER FEELING CUT OFF AND ISOLATED

- She ended up spending 3 years out of education and drifted from her friends.
- Meanwhile, the relationship with her family was disintegrating as her eating disorder made her feel angry, bitter and resentful.
- Even at Christmas, she would choose to sit in her room alone rather than eat with her family.



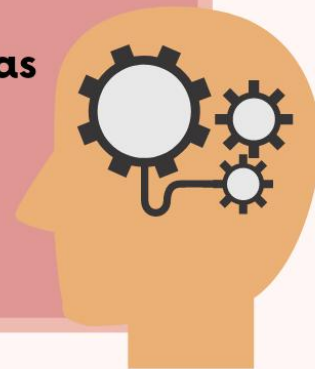
...SHE FELT THE ONLY RELATIONSHIP SHE HAD LEFT WAS THE EATING DISORDER

- **At this point in her life she was at university.**
- **To everyone around her, she appeared happy and successful with strong job prospects.**
- **In reality, she was at rock bottom. Desperately sad and despairingly lonely.**



... BUT THIS ROCK BOTTOM BECAME THE TURNING POINT

- She had finally reached the point where recovery was the only option left.
- She began to challenge her eating disorder.
- Months on and she was physically fitter and mentally stronger.



... THERE WAS STILL AN OVERWHELMING LONLINESS

- She had moved away from home by now and found a job.
- She thought she ought to be excited at the years of adventures ahead.
- But she felt lonely without the "company" of her eating disorder.



BUT SHE FOUND STRENGTH IN THE FACT SHE HAD OVERCOME ANOREXIA

- **The realisation she had overcome such a major illness sparked a sense of empowerment.**
- **She began to make peace with being lonely. She learned to love herself and focused on her own interests.**
- **A solo surfing holiday was one of her most liberating experiences!**



SHE BEGAN TO ADDRESS HER ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

- **She attended social events, including those that involved eating!**
- **She joined a gym and met likeminded people.**
- **She began to repair old friendships and make new ones too.**



SHE REFLECTS ON HOW LONELY HER EATING DISORDER MADE HER FEEL.

- **She admits she feels a decade of her life was wasted in the grips of an eating disorder.**
- **But she feels she can scrape some lessons from her past: by loving and being kind to herself, she can also be a better friend to others too.**
- **She hopes this will reduce loneliness in both her and her loved ones.**

