

Case Studies: In their own words

Scarlett: I've had diabetes since I was 14, and an eating disorder since age 16. I'm now 26. Although I've never completely been free of eating disorder symptoms, for a period I kept things in relatively good control. Over the past couple years, however, I started omitting insulin much more drastically. I'd go for weeks without a single shot. My A1C is double what it was. I've been through intensive treatment but this is a persistent, cruel disease. Last month I got an infection that destroyed all the bone in my bottom front teeth. Those four teeth had to be pulled. The dentist remarked, "Twenty-five is a hell of an age to lose your front teeth." Younger women have suffered much worse complications from this disorder, and a few teeth are nothing compared to what I could lose if I continue on this track. I believe that one of the reasons many with diabulimia resist treatment, or refrain from being fully honest with their treatment team, is that we are plain tired of trying to explain this disorder. It's not a matter of lack of education-- I know how to carb count, thank you very much. I know the frightening complications for which I'm putting myself at risk. I even know that I'd look fine -- maybe even better -- if I gained some weight. None of that knowledge stops me. I do not need a nutrition lesson or a pep talk.



Claire: I spent a lot of time feeling very frustrated because although the professionals were able to support me from an ED perspective for some of them it was the first time they had to deal with a diabetic and the unit had never had a diabetic patient before...so that didn't fill me confidence or hope that they knew what they were doing. No one understood my fear about insulin and weight gain, they all tried to fob me off and tell me I was imagining it and that it was all part of the my eating disordered mind lying to me. Even when I quoted the scientific facts at them they still tried to make me believe that taking insulin would in no way affect my weight. A lot of the time I felt that that they thought of me as a 'naughty child' refusing to take my medicine because I didn't like it.

Sian (GM of DWED who tragically passed away despite being in recovery Sept 2011) I am rushed to A&E, where it takes six doctors to stop me from dying, and spend days unconscious in intensive care. My mum is told if I had got there an hour later I would have been dead. When I come round and see



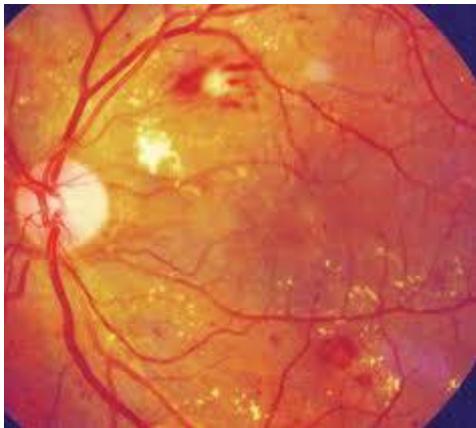
my mum asleep in a chair next to me I feel a huge sense of guilt, a feeling I am now used to and growing very tired of. I can barely move but am very aware of the many drips and wires keeping me alive in my neck, arms and groin. I survived this time. Was it all worth it? No.

Despite this not being the first or last time that this happened I was never treated for any kind of eating disorder. Doctors were aware that I had fallen into DKA numerous times but never questioned why, just putting it down to something that I would 'grow out of'. I became a compulsive liar, always having an excuse for the persistently ridiculously



high HbA1c results. No, doctors never helped me with my eating disorder and at the time I didn't realise that it was even an eating disorder as I still loved to eat. I felt like I was the only person doing this and I couldn't understand why I couldn't take my insulin. All I knew was that the mere thought of injecting insulin terrified me. In my distorted view, I might as well of been injecting fat. I became somebody I hated and deceived everybody I loved.

Daisy: 9pm: I wake up and have to bolt to the toilet and urinate for an abnormally long time as usual. My genitals itch with the thrush that dogs me constantly . I have stomach cramps but they're not from any menstruation issues as I've not had a period for well over a year now. I look in the mirror and see dead eyes, flaky skin and as I run my hands through my hair a big clump comes out in my hand. I go back to bed in the knowledge that I will not have a good nights sleep but rather one that is broken with frequent toilet breaks and if I'm having a really bad night, trips to the fridge, more sugar.



6:30am I have to set my alarm for this time even though I do not have to get out of bed till 8. It takes me this long to summon the will to get up. When I do its back to the toilet again and then straight on the scales. I am a lot lighter than I was yesterday. My BMI is below that needed for an anorxia diagnosis. I am severly underweight yet I look in the mirror and all I see is fat. I know that I am also Body

Dismorphic. I call in sick to work... again... I know that soon I won't have a job anymore just like I don't see my friends anymore.... just like I don't play in my band anymore... just like I don't have a boyfriend anymore. I realise I have lost everything to the monster in my head. I wonder how much of me is left up there. I can't do it anymore.

Laura: I got diagnosed with type one diabetes at age 10 with the usual sympoms thirst, and weight loss. At age 16 I developed an eating disorder. I lost some weight by reducing my intake and running track. Then, out of nowhere, I started bingeing. I would buy numerous chocolate bars and eat them all. Somewhere around that time, I learned that if I did not "cover" those binges with insulin, I would not gain weight. People told me all about complications, but it felt so remote. So I kept going. It became habit. Now I am 42 years old. I have lost two toes on my left foot, and had a below the knee amputation on my right side last August. I had a wound so big the doctors didn't think it could be saved. I have been in a wheelchair for about 7 years because I could no longer feel my feet. My legs got weak and my balance was terrible. I have also had about 20 laser surgeries on my eyes. Thankfully, I have not had any extensive kidney damage, though it has been a while since I got that checked.

When I was fifteen, I set the school record for the two-mile run. Now I cannot walk. It's all because of Diabulimia

