

Share Your Story

BY JENNI SCHAEFER, AUTHOR OF *ALMOST ANOREXIC*, *LIFE WITHOUT ED*, AND *GOODBYE ED, HELLO ME*

I receive emails daily from people who wish to share their recovery stories by speaking and writing. I am asked about this so often that I wrote about it specifically in my books, *Almost Anorexic* and *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me*.

If you are trying to decide whether or not to share your recovery story, I encourage you to get in touch with your heart to discover the reasons behind why you want to speak out. Talk with your therapist and other people on your support team for guidance.

Some people get involved in sharing their story as a way of staying connected to the eating disorder identity, which is obviously not healthy. Being an “eating disorder helper” serves a similar role in their lives as being an “eating disorder sufferer” had.

On the other hand, some people decide to share their story and to possibly even make eating disorders a part of their career (e.g. by becoming a therapist or dietitian), because they have always had a deep desire to help others. For these individuals, sharing their story and providing hope to those who still struggle satisfies that longtime passion of wanting to help people. This can be a very healthy pursuit.

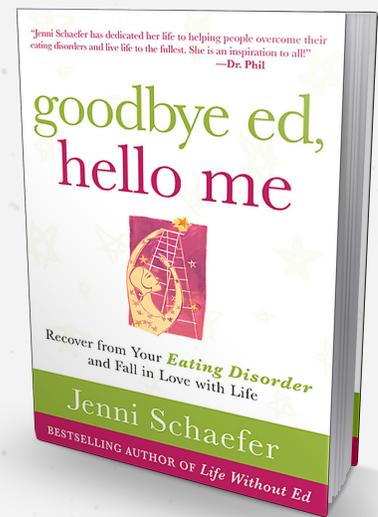
I entered the path to become a doctor in college (and was accepted into medical school), because I knew that a career in medicine would allow me to make a difference in other people’s lives. For me, sharing my recovery story has been a way for me to do that as well. But I admit that making eating disorders a part of my career has been frustrating at times. In *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me*, I write that I don’t want to simply be known as the “recovered girl.” I want people to know the real me.

Balance for me in the future might mean that my next book will be about something unrelated to eating disorders. Since I am fully recovered, the door of possibility and opportunity has swung wide open. I can write about anything. I can do anything at all.

And so can you. Become a teacher or even an astronaut. Start a family and make new friends. You may decide to share your story or become an eating disorder therapist. You may not.

George Eliot says, “It is never too late to be who you might have been.” Don’t let your eating disorder define you. Define your own life.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Read “Guidelines for Sharing Your Story Responsibly” by the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), NationalEatingDisorders.org/guidelines-sharing-your-story-responsibly



Jenni Schaefer is a singer/songwriter, speaker, and author of *Life Without Ed*, *Almost Anorexic*, and *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me*. Visit JenniSchaefer.com for videos, book discussion questions, sample chapters, and more. Connect with her at [Facebook.com/LifeWithoutEd](https://www.facebook.com/LifeWithoutEd), [Twitter.com/JenniSchaefer](https://twitter.com/JenniSchaefer) and [Pinterest.com/JenniSchaeferTX](https://www.pinterest.com/JenniSchaeferTX). Jenni is Chair of NEDA’s Ambassadors Council, Helpline: 1-800-931-2237.