

Ed's Rules

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EXCERPT FROM LIFE WITHOUT ED

I stepped on the elevator with three other people. That made a total of five of us on that elevator. Yes, I did say five. Ed was also along for the ride. As soon as the elevator doors shut and we headed up, Ed whispered in my ear. "Congratulations, Jenni. You are the thinnest person on this elevator. You are really special today." The elevator stopped at floor three, and a very petite woman stepped inside.

Ed immediately said, "Jenni, that woman is thinner than you. You are so large. You have really let yourself go." From the ground floor to level three, I felt as if I had gained twenty or thirty pounds. Have you ever gained weight while riding an elevator? If you have, then you must be familiar with one of Ed's favorite rules: "You must always be the thinnest person in any given place at any given time."

Ed has rules for everything. There are the wardrobe rules: "Your 'skinny' jeans must always fit your body loosely," and, "on the days that you binge, you must wear your baggy clothes." Then, there is the dining rule: "You must always eat less than the people you are dining with on any occasion." Your Ed may have slightly different rules for you, but one thing is for sure. He has rules, and he expects you to follow them.

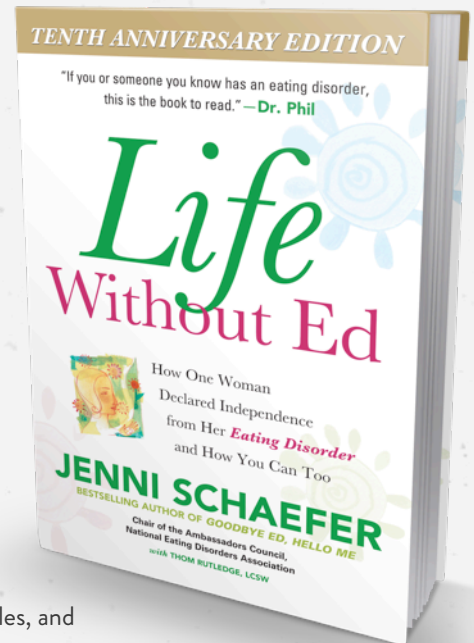
What happens if you do not follow Ed's rules? When I don't obey Ed, he tells me that I am a worthless individual. He says, "If you don't do what I am saying, you will never be successful. People will just look down on you for your whole life. You will never realize your full potential."

On the other hand, if I listen to Ed and do what he says, he tells me, "You are so special. You are doing what 'normal' people can't do. You are a success. If you keep listening to me, your life will be wonderful. You will always be in control." In reality, you must remember who is really in control – Ed.

When you are trying to begin your separation from Ed, it is important that you first recognize Ed's rules in your life. You must be able to distinguish between standards that Ed holds for you and healthy boundaries that you set for yourself. You must realize that Ed's rules do not make sense. For instance, many of Ed's rules contradict each other. On one day, Ed tells you not to touch that ice cream or dare drink that soda. Then, the very next day, Ed says, "Eat that entire gallon of ice cream, and drink three cans of soda. Eat as much as you can until you feel sick." Ed's rules are designed to harm us.

After you are able to recognize Ed's rules in your life, you must try to disagree with and disobey them. Even if it seems impossible for you to actually disagree with one of Ed's rules, you must still try to disobey him. If you are able to break his rules no matter what, you are taking a huge step toward separating from Ed. Disobeying Ed means you are moving in the right direction. Don't expect it to be easy.

Ed still has his same old rules for me, but I do not have to follow them anymore. Today I act from a position of personal strength and positive self-esteem. I order what I really want to eat in a restaurant. I wear clothes that are comfortable and that I feel good in. And I can even ride up an elevator without going up a dress size.



Jenni Schaefer is a singer/songwriter, speaker, and author of *Life Without Ed* (now available as an audiobook) and *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me*. She is the co-author of *Almost Anorexic: Is My (or My Loved One's) Relationship with Food a Problem?* (released by Harvard Health Publications and Hazelden). For further recovery resources, visit JenniSchaefer.com. Connect with her at [Facebook.com/LifeWithoutEd](https://www.facebook.com/LifeWithoutEd) and [Twitter.com/JenniSchaefer](https://twitter.com/JenniSchaefer).