

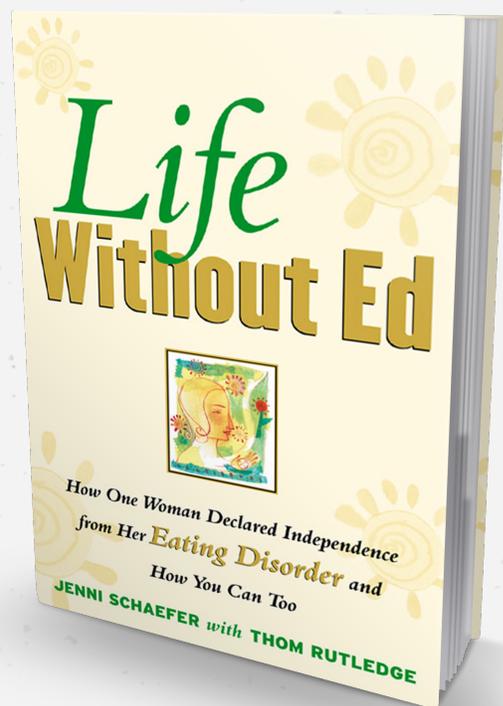
Life Without Ed

BOOK GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS created by Ruth Crumplar, LPC for a 6-week *Life Without Ed* group in Austin, Texas. Contact Ruth at ruthcrumplarcounseling@gmail.com.

PART 1: FILING FOR DIVORCE

1. Introductions – name and what each is hoping for in the group.
2. At what point did you realize that your eating wasn't normal?
3. Right away, we are introduced to this concept of thinking about the eating disorder as a relationship versus a condition. What do you think about this? Do you consider yourself to have a relationship with your eating disorder as Jenni does? One that you can divorce yourself from?
4. If you do think this is an accurate description of your eating disorder, would you call him Ed? Something else? Does it feel weird to acknowledge the eating disorder has that much of a presence that it has its own name?
5. The book talks about the importance of having supporters/fellow fighters/sojourners. Who will be your main supporters as you begin to really face Ed?
6. Jenni talks about Ed having his own set of rules for her. What are your Ed's rules in your life? In what ways have you seen them control your life?
7. Jenni also talks about Ed having a different set of values than she does. What are your Ed's values? In what ways are they different than your own?
8. How has following Ed's rule and values instead of your own hurt yourself or other people?
9. What has Ed taken from you during the time he has been a part of your life?
10. What has Ed "given" to you – what purpose/function has he served?

Know that as you begin to fight Ed, he will fight back – so be prepared and take courage! Know that as his messages get stronger, it is because he feels threatened – keep fighting him and lean on others in group and your outside supporters for help!



DOWNLOAD DIVORCE DECREE FROM ED (& personalize it) on the *Life Without Ed* page of JenniSchaefer.com.

PART 2: IT'S NOT ABOUT THE FOOD?!

1. How did everyone feel about group last week? Any questions or concerns?
2. How was this past week for you? What was easy? Hard? In what ways did you feel Ed fighting against you trying to 'file for divorce'?
3. Yes, at the root, eating disorders are not about food, but our relationship with food is obviously a huge symptom of the eating disorder. What is your current relationship to food? What are the healthy aspects? The unhealthy ones?
4. Think about the last time you went to a restaurant – do you remember what Ed was saying to you? What did he tell you to eat? Or not eat? What did he tell you when you left the restaurant?
5. Do you ever feel “guilted” into eating something (by friends/family?) How do you feel after? Do you ever think of saying no?
6. Are there foods you consider ‘bad?’ Do you ever eat them? What happens if you do (what does Ed say?) How do you feel?
7. Jenni talks about the weekend with the cake and Ed working to get her to ‘compromise.’ What are the ways that Ed tricks you into compromising even when you are eating healthfully?
8. When are your most challenging ‘food times’ (either over-eating, restricting, purging, etc). Certain holidays? Work deadlines? Being around certain family members?
9. Do you also have a relationship with Counter Ed? In what ways does he show up?
10. What about Ms Perfectionist? In what ways does she dictate choices you make and how you feel about yourself?
11. Has anyone ever had a food plan? In what ways do Ed, Counter Ed, and Ms Perfectionist try to ruin food plans?
12. In what ways might a food plan be helpful? In what ways would you need to be careful? Is this something you think would be helpful for you to do (with the help of a nutritionist)? What about just writing a “healthy eating vision”?

DOWNLOAD DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM ED

(and personalize it) on the *Life Without Ed* page of JenniSchaefer.com.

PART 3: MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

1. How was this past week? Any questions from group last week?
2. The chapter this week was all about appearances and how our obsession with them/emphasis on them is a big factor in keeping our relationship with Ed alive and well. What are some of the main messages that Ed tells you about your appearance?
3. Jenni was told that she didn't "look like she had an eating disorder" - how have either well-meaning or ignorant comments about your appearance affected you and your road to recovery?
4. The scale - Jenni completely quit using hers as one of her efforts to separate from Ed. Can you imagine doing this? Would this be a good thing for you? What might be some other things that would be good for you to quit either forever or for a period of time? If you are worried about not keeping up with your weight, what about entrusting someone else - like your doctor to do it for you?
5. Do how your clothes fit dictate how you feel about yourself?
6. Jenni realizes that just because she is no longer "skinny Jenni," she has not lost her true identity - just the one Ed was trying to make her have. What characteristics/qualities do you want to really be known for? In what/whom do you want your true identity to be found?
7. Do you tend to hear things differently than what is actually being said? What would happen if you asked people like Jenni did, what they really meant? Do you mean what you say to people?
8. Comparison is one of the most destructive ways to live and causes us to never be satisfied or happy with who we are. In what ways does Ed try to get you to compare yourself to others around you? What are you 'competing' for?
9. What is Ed trying to hypnotize you into believing?
10. Could you repeat Ed's lies to yourself as a child? What about another little girl? Or a friend? If not, why do you listen to Ed?
11. What "powerful thing" - clothes or other items - might you consider getting rid of in order to more fully separate from Ed?

DOWNLOAD "WEARING ED GLASSES" AMBIGUOUS THIN/LARGE FIGURE

(a body image exercise) on the *Almost Anorexic* page of JenniSchaefer.com.

PART 4: MERRY-GO-ROUND

1. Check in – how is everyone doing? Anything from group last week you wanted to revisit?
2. As a reminder – even though our struggles may manifest themselves in different ways, we are all here because we are trying to break free from our relationship with Ed. He has had a lot of power over each of us and we are here to help ourselves and each other to end this abusive relationship. No matter what our day-to-day struggles look like, the root of our problems are very much the same.
3. Jenni talks a lot about how Ed and Ms Perfectionist try to jump in and ‘correct’ any mistakes (missed bills, fender benders, etc) in completely irrational ways. Can you think of a ‘bad day’ recently where Ed dictated how you handled either a mistake or something hard that happened? (ex. a binge after an argument with a friend/spouse)? Ed thinks that food is the solution to every problem. What might be some better solutions for you next time?
4. Jenni talks about how her main relationship in her life was with Ed – how has your relationship with Ed stolen time/experiences/joy away from other relationships?
5. Do you struggle with feeling guilty? What are some areas you could strive for achieving some positive guilt in (saying no to things, etc.)?
6. Could you relate to Jenni feeling overwhelmed about calling her boyfriend or not? In what ways does Ms. Perfectionist (or another character) take a small situation, like calling someone, and turn it into a life altering decision?
7. What situations cause you to turn all power/decision making over to Ed? When are the typical times where you feel like you ‘just can’t handle it’ and let Ed take over?
8. What would be on your “mix tape”? What are the negative messages about yourself that you hear on repeat? What are the most common/most played?
9. What does recovery mean for you? What do you hope for yourself? Spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically?

Ed (like a very persistent abusive boyfriend) may never stop trying to control you – but you don’t have to listen to him anymore! You can choose to disagree and disobey Ed each and every day and as you do that, he will begin to lose his presence and power in your life.

DOWNLOAD WEDDING VOWS (TO YOURSELF!)
on the *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me* page of JenniSchaefer.com.

PART 5: ED'S LAST STAND

1. Checking in. This chapter is all about relapse – which might be overwhelming to think about when you are just working to get better –remember, relapse while you are recovering is a real possibility, but it doesn't mean you aren't still recovering!
2. Jenni talks about her inner invisible child. This may be a hard concept to get behind initially, but what do you think about this? Do you think you have an invisible child – you as a little girl in you somewhere? Who do you want to be taking care of her? How can you ensure that she is well cared for? What messages do you want her to hear about who she is and how she should live her life?
3. Is it easy for you to think one bad day or one bad part of a day means your recovery is ruined? What are some of the things Ed and/or Ms Perfectionist tell you when you 'mess up' as you are trying to recover?
4. What are some ways you can take action and keep going? What will you do to fix that 'leaky roof?' How can you ensure that despite set backs you will do the 'next right thing?'
5. I think most people in here would agree that having supporters/people on your team is a huge and important piece of recovery. In what ways has Ed tried to (or do you anticipate Ed trying to) prevent you from reaching out to others for support when you need it?
6. For Jenni, as she was on the road to recovery, a new obsession with exercise became a 'late in the game' trick that Ed pulled. What are some new tricks/obsessions that Ed has tried to entice you with? How will you decide to choose freedom instead of a life controlled by Ed?
7. Is it tempting when you are in a difficult situation to try to figure out why instead of just getting out of it? Remember, first get out of the burning house! Then try to figure it out later 😊
8. What are some effective ways for YOU to have good relapse prevention? What would be on your 911 emergency card?
9. Let's look at the questions on page 139 – what are your triggers? When is a relapse most likely to happen?
10. What would your anti-Ed device? A letter? What would it say? If it would be something other than a letter, what would it be?

DOWNLOAD EVICTION NOTICE FOR ED

(and personalize it) on the *Life Without Ed* page of JenniSchaefer.com.

PART 6 & 7: THE HARD TRUTH & BELIEVE IT

1. Final week of group! Thank ya'll so much for allowing us to be apart of this journey with you. We hope that this group has provided a safe place to help you begin your life without Ed - and one that will bring more joy and freedom!
2. Did anything come up from group (or from not being at group) that ya'll want to discuss before we get started?
3. What are you willing to do to separate from Ed and fully recover? Are you willing to "go to any length?"
4. What are the 'good' things that Ed has given you - what roles has he played, what voids has he filled? What things do you need to grieve as you say good-bye to him?
5. Do you think you are worth spending the time/effort/money/sacrifices to get better? Does it feel selfish to spend too much time on yourself? (Remember, you can't care for anyone else well if you haven't cared at all for yourself!)
6. How can you work to have more compassion towards yourself?
7. What will it take for you to keep going? What do you foresee as some big obstacles to your recovery? How will you overcome them?
8. What are your dreams beyond recovery? What will being free from Ed allow you to do that you haven't been able to do?

DREAM BIG
TO
OVERCOME

WHAT IS YOUR DREAM?

LEARN MORE AT WWW.JENNISCHAEFER.COM