

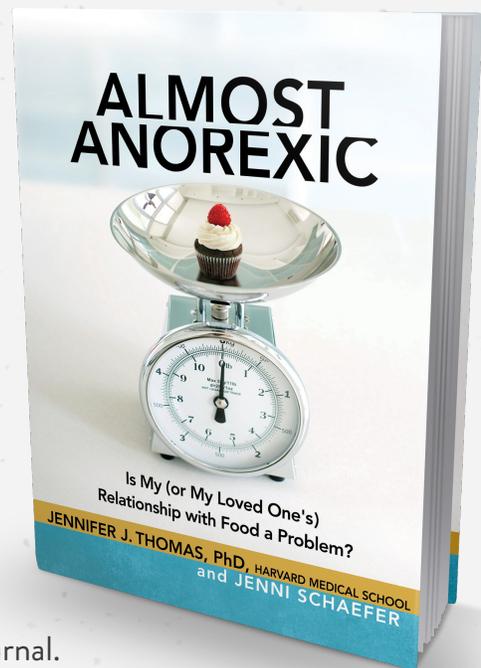
# Anorexic Web

EXCERPT FROM *ALMOST ANOREXIC*, BY JENNIFER J. THOMAS, PH.D., HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL, AND JENNI SCHAEFER

The close relationship between almost anorexia and other officially recognized eating disorders, which is illustrated in the Anorexic Web we created, often goes unnoticed.

With the five sides of the web each representing varying degrees of eating disorder symptoms, the increasingly darker shading illustrates the progression from no eating disorder (white) to almost anorexia (gray) to anorexia nervosa and other officially recognized eating disorders (black). The Anorexic Web is simply a tool to help you better visualize the complexity of eating disorders—with all of the diverse possible combinations of symptoms—and to guide you in determining where you might fit in. The symptoms of almost anorexia discussed here are also the warning signs to look for if you are concerned about a loved one.

People with anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder generally fall inside the center of the web (experiencing at least two symptoms in the black zone) while those who do not struggle typically fall outside of the web altogether. In contrast, individuals with almost anorexia usually exhibit a consistent pattern of behaviors that fall within the gray zone, between an officially recognized eating disorder and no eating disorder at all. Most people with almost anorexia will experience at least two of the symptoms depicted in gray, but eating disorders are far too complex to give hard and fast rules. For example, certain people with almost anorexia might have one symptom that falls in the black zone and none in the gray zone. Likewise, a person with no eating disorder might at times experience one symptom in the gray area. To avoid any confusion, what really matters is this: if you tend to live your life inside the web rather than outside it, you might have almost anorexia...The more symptoms a person has in the center of the web, the more likely it is that he or she has anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating disorder. Let's take a closer look at the five gray-zone symptoms to help illustrate the difference between almost anorexia and officially recognized eating disorders. You might want to log your answers to the coinciding five questions in a journal.



**Frequent Weight Changes:** Does your weight shift due to intentional attempts to drop pounds?

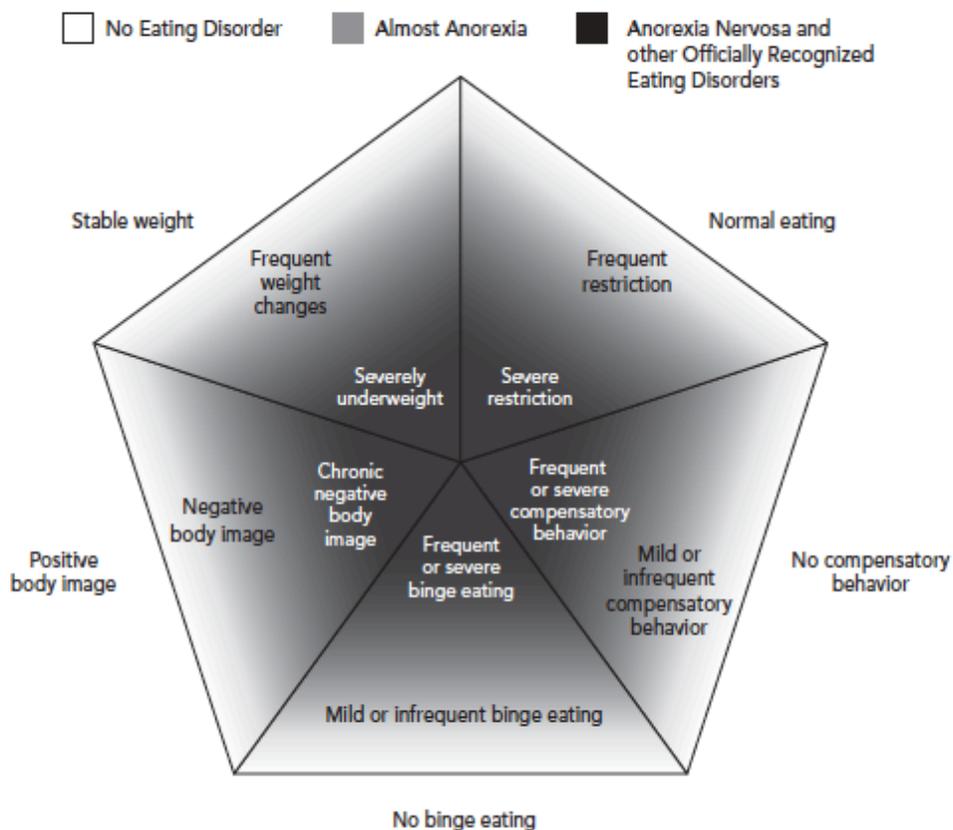
**Frequent Restriction:** Do you regularly restrict food by amount or variety?

**Mild or Infrequent Compensatory Behaviors:** Do you ever try to “make up for” calories consumed?

**Mild or Infrequent Binge Eating:** Do you ever eat large amounts of food while feeling out of control?

**Negative Body Image:** Does negative body image interfere with living your life to the fullest?

Figure 3.  
Anorexic Web



*See the book [Almost Anorexic](#) for further details about the five symptoms.*

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Jenni Schaefer is a singer/songwriter, speaker, and author of *Life Without Ed* and *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me*. Connect at [Twitter.com/JenniSchaefer](https://twitter.com/JenniSchaefer) and [Facebook.com/LifeWithoutEd](https://facebook.com/LifeWithoutEd). **This handout is downloadable at [JenniSchaefer.com](http://JenniSchaefer.com).**

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