

# Life Without Ed

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## EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK'S INTRODUCTION

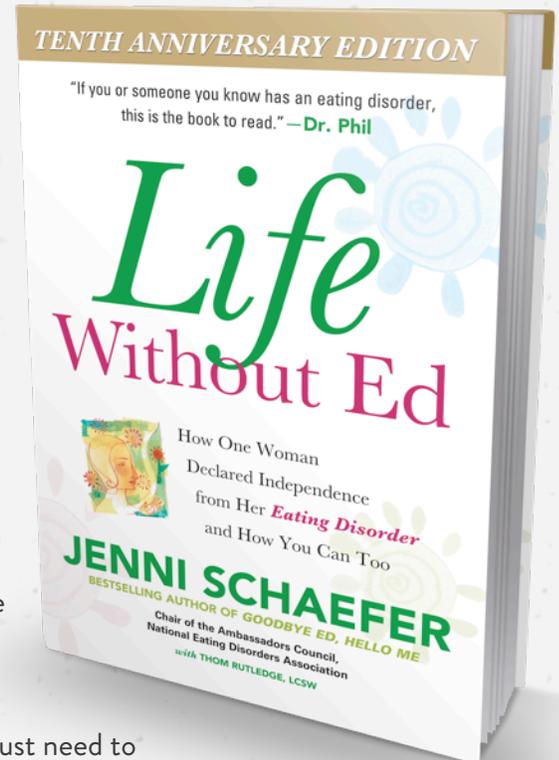
I have never been married, but I am happily divorced. Ed and I lived together for more than twenty years. He was abusive, controlling, and never once hesitated to tell me what he thought, how I was doing it wrong, and what I should be doing instead. I hated him, but I could not leave him. Ed convinced me that I needed him and that without him I was worthless, nothing special, and worse. He told me that he was looking out for my best interest—that his way was for my own good—but he always turned on me. He made promises that he never kept. When I hit bottom physically and emotionally, I finally decided to divorce him.

Let me tell you a little more about Ed. He is not a high school sweetheart. Ed is not some creep that I started dating in college. And Ed is not a guy that I met in the supermarket checkout line (although he does hang out a lot in grocery stores). Ed's name comes from the acronym E.D.—as in eating disorder. Ed is my eating disorder.

You might recognize Ed as the little voice inside that says, “You just need to lose a few more pounds,” or, “Do you know how many calories are in that?” Ed is the one who stares back at you in the mirror and says that you should be dissatisfied with your appearance. Ed talks to all of us. While some of us are deeply embroiled in a relationship with him, others are just casually dating him. Maybe you are just meeting Ed for the first time. Whether you are married to Ed or just flirting with him, this book is for you...

I use the word divorce to describe my separation from Ed because of an analogy that I learned in therapy that compares a woman's relationship with her eating disorder to an abusive marriage in which the wife is controlled and even physically beaten. Similar to a battered wife who is scared to leave her husband, a woman with anorexia and/or bulimia is afraid to leave her eating disorder behind. Often, it is all she has ever known. Women in abusive marriages frequently hide their bruises from friends and family in the same way that women with eating disorders hide their battle scars. These wives will begin healing only when they take the first step of deciding to divorce their abusers. And that is the only way that women with eating disorders can taste that same freedom in life. If you have never been married, you can think of this separation from Ed as breaking up with a boyfriend or even severing ties with a best friend. Again, the important thing to remember is separation.

In therapy, I learned that recovery is not about eliminating the eating disorder but is about changing my relationship with it. The relationship I had with Ed completely changed through the course of our separation in the same way that the relationship that a married couple has transforms through the process of a divorce. In order to



change my relationship with Ed, I had to learn to stand back and separate myself from him. I had to make room for my own opinion, which created the opportunity for me to disagree with Ed. I realized that my food obsessions and my condemnation of my own body were coming from Ed, not me. To this day, recovery is about making room for the real me to exist....

I have heard it said about some things that “From the outside looking in, you can’t understand it. From the inside looking out, you can’t explain it.” This is a wonderful description of an eating disorder. People who do not have an eating disorder cannot possibly understand it. They are not expected to any more than those of us with eating disorders are able to explain it. In my recovery, my parents were able to truly provide support only when we all accepted that they would never understand what Ed drives me to think and do. They often say, “I don’t understand, but I support you.” People don’t have to understand us. We just need them to believe us. If I tell my mom that I “feel fat,” I do not need her to convince me that I am not fat. Instead, I just need her to believe that I really do feel fat. She does not understand what that feels like, but she believes me. That’s what I need.

Sometimes in recovery, it is difficult to see exactly where you are headed. This new way of life seems to take you on a path where the destination is unclear. As Dr. Tucker says, “Direction is important, not destination.” Focus on the right path. If you stay pointed in the right direction, you do not have to worry about arriving at the proper place. By choosing to read this book, you are journeying in the right direction. Do not worry if you make wrong turns along the way. I have learned that each wrong turn is a valuable lesson as long as I keep walking.

And as long as you keep walking, you will be on your way to happiness, serenity, and divorce (from Ed, of course). For this divorce, you won’t need an expensive attorney, a judge, or even a spouse. As I said in the beginning, I have never been married. No, you don’t need a ring on your finger to divorce Ed. All you need is the willingness to keep turning the pages in this book, in your recovery, and in your life. And when you come across that page that looks like a divorce decree, you will be ready to pick up a pen, sign your name, and make it final. You will be free.

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TO  
OVERCOME

WHAT IS YOUR DREAM?

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