

Won't vs. Can't

Listen to clips from the new *Life Without Ed* audiobook at:
<http://www.jennischaefer.com/resource/audio-book-excerpts/>

EXCERPT FROM *LIFE WITHOUT ED*

The walls are bouncing in and out. I am anxious about nothing in particular. I am anxious about everything. I am afraid. I do not remember how to breathe. I feel like immediate action needs to be taken. Time is running out. I want to numb myself. I want to get out of these shaking walls. And I know just how to get out—binge. But that would be turning to Ed for help. I won't do it. I can do it, but I won't.

In therapy, I learned the important distinction between “can't” and “won't.” “Can't” suggests both that I do not have a choice and that I am not in charge of my life. “Won't” acknowledges that I have a choice and that I am in charge. When I say, “I won't binge,” I am taking full responsibility for my actions. I am actively participating in my life and not just letting things happen to me. Sure, I could definitely call Ed, and he would tell me the perfect food to binge on. But, now, I won't do it. I choose to say no.

Ed hated it when I made the switch from “can't” to “won't.” He preferred the times when I was not in charge of my life. Then, it was easier for him to sneak in and take over. When Ed would tell me, “Just skip this one meal. It's no big deal,” I would reply, “No, I can't do it.” Immediately, the “can't” indicated to Ed that he had some pull in whether or not I starved myself. And he knew that I was not running the show. Ed would say, “Sure you can. All you have to do is tell everyone that you already ate lunch.” And most of the time I would take his advice. Now, I tell Ed, “No. I won't do it.” The simple exchange of “won't” for “can't” indicates that I am in charge. I am making the decision to follow my food plan—no questions asked.

So, as I sit here today, the walls are moving in and out around me. Ed still wants me to binge:

Ed: Jenni, those walls will stop shaking if you just open that refrigerator door.

Jenni: I won't do it.

Ed: Sure, you can.

Jenni: I know I can.

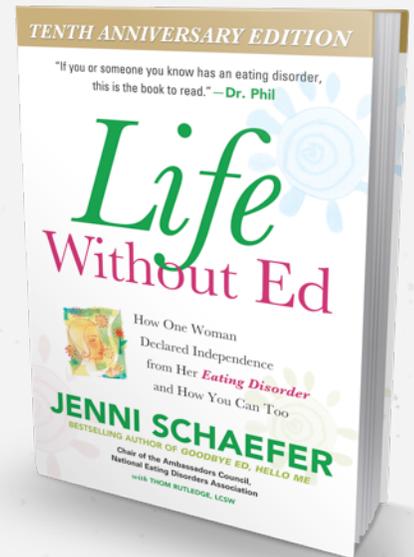
Ed: Then, what's the problem?

Jenni: I won't.

Ed: You can.

Jenni: I won't.

I played my trump card. Ed does not have a chance.



DREAM BIG
TO
OVERCOME

WHAT IS YOUR DREAM?

LEARN MORE AT

WWW.JENNISCHAEFER.COM