

I will not give up on my  
Daughter

A true account of a  
family living with  
Anorexia Nervosa.



All names have been changed for privacy.  
All events are true and based around a 13 year old girl named Summer who develops Anorexia Nervosa.  
All members of the family have contributed to the writings.  
Weights have been omitted for the benefit of Summer and for those who may find the facts triggering.

**I will not give up on my daughter:  
A true account of a family living with Anorexia Nervosa.**

This edition published 2013

1. Mental health 2. Anorexia Nervosa 3. Patients 4. Auto Biography 5. Family  
6. Self Help

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ISBN 978-0-9923531-0-0 (paperback)

All drawings, photographs and poems were submitted by the family.  
There are no pictures of the family involved.

Printed and bound in Australia by Digital Creative Services.

# *I Wish to Acknowledge*

I thank all of you who prayed for Summer and my family. I thank those who made us dinners in readiness for when we came home late from the hospital on Monday evenings. I thank my family for phoning me just to say hello and to see how things were going. I thank my friends who sent thinking of you cards and flowers. I thank my children Mia and James for accepting this challenging time and trusting that Derek and I were taking care of Summer. I also thank my gorgeous two children for continuing to love Summer even when she was at her most aggressive and destructive stage.

I thank my husband Derek for giving me hugs when I clearly looked like I needed them and although he was as confused and hurting as much as me, he didn't give up and continued to find new ways or different tactics to defeat Anna.

I thank the professional team who supported us and still do, to this day from Westmead Children's Hospital, particularly the kind and hard working Annaleise Robertson and Dr Sloane Madden.

Last, but certainly not least, I thank Summer for being a brave little girl who continues to take on the devil.

Grace X

# *Resources*

Maudsley Family Therapy, also known as Family Based Treatment provides family therapy for the treatment of Anorexia Nervosa. It was devised by Christopher Dare and colleagues at the Maudsley Hospital in London in 1985. It is a proven treatment that is most effective in assisting patients under 18 and within 3 years of the onset of their illness.

The Maudsley approach does not view the family at fault, in fact they work with you as a family group believing that there is no better place for the child than to be home having the love and family support required to get well.

There are three phases involved in the Maudsley method.

- \* Weight restoration.
- \* Returning control over eating back to the adolescent.
- \* Establishing a healthy adolescent identity.

The treatment usually lasts one year and involves between 15 – 20 therapy sessions. This approach can mostly be construed as an intensive outpatient treatment where parents play an active and positive role.

**Contact:**

Westmead Children's Hospital, Sydney, Australia

Adolescent Medicine

Phone: (02) 9845 2446

# Extra Resources

The Butterfly Foundation

[www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au](http://www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au)

Eating Disorders Association in your state.

NSW [www.edf.org.au](http://www.edf.org.au)

VIC [www.eatingdisorders.org.au](http://www.eatingdisorders.org.au)

QLD [www.eda.org.au](http://www.eda.org.au)

SA [www.communitywebs.org](http://www.communitywebs.org)

NT Association for Mental Health - (08) 8981 4128

WA Eating Disorders Alliance - [www.carersw.asn.au](http://www.carersw.asn.au)

TAS [www.tas.eatingdisorders.org.au](http://www.tas.eatingdisorders.org.au)

Reachout: [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)

For outside Australia, links can be easily found to Eating Disorder Associations, Blogs, facebook support pages and information by completing an online search.

Please also consider seeking assistance from your Doctor or Paediatrician.

# *WARNING* SIGNS OF *ANOREXIA*

## **Excessive Exercise**

You panic after eating

Striving for perfection

The pursuit of control

Are you now having to lie?

## **FEARFUL OF FATNESS**

Dramatic weight loss

**When you look in the mirror are you seeing  
fat when in fact you are wasting away?**

Monthly period stops

Rigid dieting

# What does Anorexia do to your Body and mind?

## Depression and Suicide

Hair Loss

## Thyroid Hormone Decreases

Metabolism slows

Low white blood cell count

Heart failure and DEATH

Heart decays as body looks for protein

Slower heart rate causes - fatigue, fainting excess sleep

Rough, dry, scaly skin

Organs deteriorate

Lanugo Appearance - layer of soft down like hair all over body

Muscles waste away

Hands swell - may turn blue

**Anorexia isolates you from everyone**

## *Introduction by Babs Helleman*

*Babs is Head of English at The King's School in Parramatta, NSW, and a published author of a number of Secondary English textbooks.*

This book reflects the reality for both the daughter, Summer and the family, who live through what can only be described as "hell" for a period of 9 months.

It is designed to help families understand how invasive the disease of Anorexia Nervosa is and how the balance between a normal, healthy life can be very fragile. Through reading Grace's diary accounts and Summer's poetic responses it is hoped that every reader will gain an insight into this disease - one that is often hidden from the public eye.

It is ironic that both the sufferer and the family see a degree of shame associated with this disease, perhaps best captured in Grace's entry of October 8th when she expresses that if it was cancer the "family could fight the battle together." It is clear, that whilst the family, with unconditional love can help, ultimately it is only Summer who can and must fight the demon in order to recover. This is why the disease is so hard for the family, who in many respects remain powerless. All

logic and beliefs are challenged; all the instilled values are flaunted as the sufferer becomes consumed by an inner demon, in this text, thoughtfully named "Anna" to represent Anorexia.

The title of this text "I will not give up on my daughter" is an important mantra that gives strength to Grace and ultimately Summer. Grace's diary entries are real as is Summer's poetry. Both reflect their inner turmoil and determination, yet also reveal the devastating impact of Anorexia on the individual and the family. They capture their inner thoughts at significant times as each tries to fight the disease in particularly distinct ways.

This book is essential reading, not only for the families affected but for all teenage girls and boys. The public perception is that it is a "girls" disease but this is not the case. Dr Mark Warren from the Cleveland Centre for Eating Disorders states:

*ED in men was thought to be almost non-existent, in the 80's and 90's about 10% and now 25-30%. So all we know is that it is more prevalent than was previously thought. In addition, boys engage in some behaviour unusual for girls- including steroid use, spitting, and over the counter muscle enhancers. If we include these behaviours, the prevalence of ED in boys may be even higher.*

I hope this book will be read widely and taught in secondary schools as part of the Personal, Health & Development programme. It also has a place in the English classroom.



*It's not the difficulties of life  
that defines you,  
You can't help that.  
It's what you do AFTER the difficulty  
that really tests who you are.*

*Grace  
November 2012*

# Foreword

As a Counsellor, my main purpose is to listen and assist my client to arrive at their own conclusion and decision. My job is to then support and offer ways on how they will then get from point A to point B.

As a Counsellor, I was unable to help my daughter; I was far too close to the situation. I decided to drop the "professional" hat and just be her Mum, I couldn't be both.

So I now will attempt to draw from my experience and share with you my thoughts - remembering everyone is different and everyone will experience a different journey. Anorexia is such an uncharted illness (still) however - if there are just 3 things I hope you gain from reading this as a parent, caretaker or friend, these are:

1. Trust your instincts. You know your child best, if you feel Anorexia could be a factor as behaviour, mood and the weight loss is present and you are still having doubts, don't wait for this "thing" to pass, it is not a cold - it won't pass, it will take hold and get worse.
2. Get help for your child. Don't be afraid to ask for help for yourself and don't think that information will be fast coming. You really do need to find out things for yourself, ask lots of questions, read and Google, even when your loved one is under Hospital care.
3. I think this is the most important because if Anorexia doesn't kill your child, the guilt will. Be careful that you aren't a casualty of the guilt. Please believe me when I say that "you" or your "child" is NOT to blame for this illness. Anorexia does not only effect dysfunctional families, single parent families, poor families, over indulged families, low income families or high income families. Anorexia does not discriminate. This thing attacks "happy and normal"

families too. Don't waste your time trying to find blame - put your energies into fighting Anna.

If you are like me, and have other children, this is the time to be open and honest with them. Sit down together and answer any and all questions they have about Anorexia, the behavioural, psychological and physical symptoms that they are seeing, but not understanding. Even though you are in crisis mode, so are your other children. For us, we used to be a functional, happy family and had a fulfilling busy life that suddenly morphed into a dysfunctional, explosive and erratic one. Even though Summer required 24 hour care and monitoring, and you are exhausted and emotionally spent, you just have to find that bit extra for the other kids in the household. It is very hard (what an understatement) and you will ask yourself every day how you got here. Unfortunately, there is no answer other than to keep on going and brace yourself for the ride!

So much can go wrong with having Anorexia, the side effects and possible long term damage is mind blowing. The fact that your child either no longer can attend school or is failing miserably is another factor that will cause you stress,

particularly if your child is in their senior years of school. My stress was through the roof and at times I couldn't remember what I had for dinner by the time I fell into bed.

I learnt very quickly to write things down that I had agreed to, for there were many times I was caught out and I'm also certain there were times I was being taken advantage of by Mia and James when it came to extra pocket money or parties that I don't remember agreeing to. What helped my family was structure, routine and keeping the household running as smoothly as possible. Maintaining as much "normal" as possible, insisting the other children maintained their sports, friendships, school responsibilities and household chores was important.

You will at times, doubt your own strength and your ability to keep going at it again and again and again, day after day after week after month and in our case, after year. You will want to give up and walk out the door yourself.

There will be times that you will prefer to take the easier option than to demand your Anorexic child to eat. Let's face it, who really wants the argument, the piercing screams, the

psychotic head thrashing or the risk of her running away, or worse, hurting herself? But you can't, you just can't. Be assured, you will find out more about yourself in this time like I did. I have sacrificed so much during this time, anything from my health, my work, my friendships, my social life, my dreams, my husband and myself. I know I cannot keep doing what I am doing as I will fall apart, get sick or worse. To be a carer is very demanding, to be a carer for a child who has developed a mental illness is insufferable. You will miss and grieve for the child you once had, even though the person in front of you looks like your child, right now, she might as well be a perfect stranger.

At the back of your mind, you will always wonder what the trigger was, what happened, what was said and what caused the arrival of Anorexia? I did eventually find out.

Summer and I have been working on Book 2 whilst I was finalising this one ready for print. It is about the second year of living with Anorexia Nervosa.

Unfortunately life for us has been even more demanding, upsetting and at times impossibly overwhelming. Mia wanted to write "Jokes, wait for Book 2. Life for us is about

to get real” but thought better of it, because it isn't a game, and certainly not a topic to be taken lightly.

My family's story is not a happy one, it is challenging and very raw. I hope it brings comfort if you are going through something similar, for at least you can feel that you are not alone and that what you are experiencing is par for the course of living with Anna(rexia).

Thank you for reading our story and purchasing our book. A proportion of the proceeds will be donated to the Children's Hospital to assist with the research and treatment of Eating Disorders.

**I would now like to introduce you to my family.**

**My husband Derek**

**My eldest daughter Mia**

**Summer, the co-author of this book**

**and my**

**youngest son, James**







Summer Speaks from the Heart

*Letting Anorexia in is  
the Biggest Mistake of My Life*

Have you ever felt like  
you were being controlled?

Have you ever felt you were possessed  
by a thought you can't remember?

Have you ever been told by other people  
that this isn't normal?

Have you realised you have an utter obsession  
with something that you loathe?

Well that's what it feels like living  
with Anna(rexia).

It all started with a comment,  
A comment that has stuck with me  
my whole life,

By someone that I didn't think I would remember  
after all these years.

But that comment, has changed my life.  
That comment will make me stronger  
when I finally get through this journey of  
inner strength and self discovery.

Those words, fat, big, weight and kilogram.  
The words don't scare me,  
It's the meaning of the word,  
I was and am avoiding.  
I created a game.  
A game of hunger.  
A game of pain

A game that caused me to lose my laugh.

Disappointment is all I feel  
When I look back and remember  
My decision to join the game of anorexia.

**I lost myself.**

**I lost Summer.**

**This is my story of how I will  
get her back.**