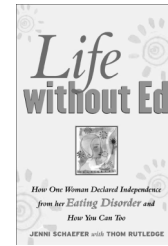


Don't Blame Ed

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Perspective is a powerful thing. To think of your eating disorder as something --- or metaphorically as someone --- distinct and separate from you can change everything. Suddenly, “you *have* an eating disorder” rather than “you *are* an eating disorder.” Suddenly, what has made no sense to you in the past becomes clear and understandable. Suddenly, you have the option of thinking eating disorder thoughts but not acting on them. Perceiving yourself as separate from your eating disorder puts you in a position, maybe for the first time, to do something about it. Ironically, recognizing how you have been victimized by Ed (eating disorder) creates the opportunity to put an end to your victimization.

Be very careful not to fall into the trap of continuing to think of yourself as a victim of your eating disorder. By remaining in the victim position and not being accountable for your actions, you are preventing yourself from making forward progress in your recovery. Once you have distinguished yourself from Ed, the responsibility for your actions falls squarely on your shoulders. If you cheat on your meal plan today, or if you are in full restricting mode, or bingeing mode, don’t blame Ed. Of course, if it was not for Ed whispering all those creative suggestions into your ear, you would not be in the mess you are in, right? But the fact that Ed exists is not the problem you need to solve. The problem you need to solve is your inclination to agree with and obey him.

In order to recover from your eating disorder, you have to practice responding to Ed’s interpretations and instructions from a position of health, strength and sanity. Repetition is the key to mastery, and repetition is precisely what will set you free. Never let Ed have the last word. You don’t need to argue with him (arguing with any addictive/compulsive voice is futile), but you do need to be sure you are refusing to cooperate with him.

If you relapse, don’t tell me that “Ed made me do it,” because he didn’t. He cannot make you follow his instructions; he cannot make you believe his interpretations. Sure, he is extremely persuasive: he is a talented blend of brilliant attorney and master hypnotist. But you have the ability --- and the responsibility --- to collect all the information and all the support that you need to defy him. Your job is to gather all that rebellious energy that you probably have been directing at the very people who want to help you, channeling it instead toward Ed.

Once you know the difference between Ed and you, the existence of your eating disorder stops being the problem. I’ll repeat that one: the fact that you have an eating disorder is not the problem to be solved. The problem you must solve is in how you respond to your eating disorder. The time you spend pointing at Ed insisting that he go away and leave you alone is time wasted. The energy you spend blaming Ed for your situation is energy wasted. Listen carefully to what Ed has to say to you, but listen with the intention of formulating your recovery-response. When Ed has spoken, try asking yourself these two questions:

What’s the truth? --- and ---- What am I going to do about it?

Thom Rutledge is the author of *Embracing Fear: How to Turn What Scares Us into Our Greatest Gift* and co-author (with Jenni Schaefer) of *Life Without Ed: How One Woman Declared Independence from Her Eating Disorder & How You Can Too*. Thom is available for telephone consultations and facilitates a weekend retreat, Beyond Eating Disorders, three times a year.

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