

Families & Eating Disorders

Chapter 2 of 9: Diagnosis

Tracey:

Looking back, it was an eating disorder waiting to be diagnosed. At the time, I didn't want her to have an eating disorder, I didn't want my child to have to go down that path. We had one ... I've had a cousin who was very sick for a long time, and I didn't want that for Veronica. So at that stage, we were just at the local doctor, saying ok, you know, maybe if we get her weighed and we keep an eye on what she is doing and her health and her blood pressure and all those things, we can kind of get her through it.

Trevor:

One of the hardest things for us as parents was, and it was something that we had to learn and accept, was that you get to a point where you can't do it yourself, its beyond you. That's a really hard thing to do as a parent, as a family, to hand over responsibility of, you know, looking after your child to someone else. You're not handing over altogether but you have to because you're not equipped to deal with it.

Carol:

She got to the point that she wouldn't even swallow her own spit, so it was obvious that there was something seriously not ok and that we couldn't go on at home with her in that state. So I explained to her what would happen, should she end up in hospital, and she was still unable to even eat anything. So we were very fortunate that she had been assessed by a paediatrician quite quickly and he understood the seriousness of what was happening and he arranged an admission.

Lisa:

Well, with Suzanne I clearly remember the girls, because they were very knowledgeable of eating disorders from school going, you know, Suzanne's anorexic. And I was probably, we were in denial, going 'Don't be silly, this is ridiculous, she's not. Yeah she's a bit mixed up'. But I just wouldn't have a bar of this, she's anorexic. Because she didn't look it. She was still eating alright. As the year went on, her behaviour, just, was very bad. And I remember I got a book one day and I was just in the library and I thought, right, I need to do something here and I literally cried in the library, because there was this list of ten things and I thought, 'My God, she's got seven. She is anorexic'.

Sonya:

I had driven past this place many, many times, and I live very close to it, so it wasn't a matter of distance, it was just a matter of being able to stop the car and go in because for me it was actually accepting that this is a problem. And its very important for the person with the eating disorder to accept 'I have a problem that I need to deal with'. But it's also something for the people around also to accept this. So I did stop the car one day and asked for referrals so she was referred to a GP.

Veronica:

It was a little bit sneaky, I have to admit, the way they did it. They didn't go there and say 'ok, you need to weigh her'. I got an infection on my arm in a sore so I went in for that and I had to keep going back to get dressings, and all of a sudden he's like Why don't we check your weight?. The next week it was We'll check it again just to make sure, and then we'll check your blood pressure. And then once my arm healed up, he'd be like Why don't we just come in for a chat every week?. I was like Why are we chatting and weighing?.

Ian:

So we started off by visiting the family GP, and from there, he was, tended to be fairly reassuring about things, but reminded us to watch certain aspects of how things were developing and from there as we saw it developing we started to explore options for talking to other professionals about her condition.

Rosanne:

Well the dietician was the first person, first contact, that first week when I got her back from the UK, and that was just, a very frightening week because she looked so ghastly. And I couldn't make an immediate appointment with anyone else other than this dietician because I was on the phone trying to find help. And she was just brilliant that day, she talked, she talked to my daughter, she talked for about an hour, and when we came out, my daughter looked at me and said How did she know?. Because she just, the dietician, just spoke about all the symptoms that my daughter might be experiencing.

Carol:

Once the anorexia was outed and we said this is what's happening, then it really tightened its grip and then she got serious about the whole thing and resisted eating. And then we notice that she was always cold. Then we noticed that she would sit on the couch and she didn't seem to have a lot of energy. Everything became crystal clear but we didn't really pick it up until later.

Malcolm:

The frustrating part was when Suzanne, when we thought Rightyo perhaps there is something wrong, we found it very difficult with doctors, didn't we? Like, at Swan Hill, we couldn't get a ... they wouldn't ... we couldn't go the right doctor that sort of said, yes, look this is a problem.

Rosanne:

She started seeing a local doctor where she was working, and I was in touch with the doctor but the doctor was actually also convinced that, by my daughter and her behaviour, that she was actually ok.

Malcolm:

With Tasha, once you've been there you recognise the signs a lot quicker and, and she just started exercising, limiting her food and yeah we were right on it, but when you get it its probably too late anyway. Like you think if you can get it early, we can get out of this quick, but...

Lisa:

(That's what we thought)

Malcolm:

It's not. I think it's, to me, Tasha's got to run the course, and hopefully we are three quarters of the way through.

Lisa: Yeah.