

Families & Eating Disorders

Chapter 4 of 9: Meal time

Sonya:

Not that long ago she took some yoghurt for breakfast and she just put it into the bowl and I said You didn't show me how much it was in the measuring cup and she said No we don't need to do that anymore and I said I think we do need to do it because that's what's been asked of you to do. Now normally that's not a natural process for me at all. It would just be trust her, why would we measure, you know, it's just not what you do in life, you don't measure you eat. And yet having that boundary of this is what you need to have I could say 'this is what the dietician said and this is what needs to be done'. And so she did do it and she did measure it and so it is constantly watching.

I try, I get my breakfast when she is getting her breakfast, we do have all, most of our meals together unless she's going out or I need to be out but we are in constant contact. And she'll show me when, it's unusually yoghurt, not always but it's often yoghurt and fruit and nuts for breakfast and so she'll show me in the container before she puts the yoghurt in. But there are time when I think, oh I haven't seen that and I've sat down and I've thought oh I don't know if there's enough.

Or if she changes her breakfast. Recently she thought she'd have something different and she had a couple a slices of bread and I looked at that bread and I thought, that bread is so, so thin it's almost not a slice. And she'd just sat down to start eating, and I said to her, you need to put some more bread on your plate or something on your plate because there's not enough. And after I said it I knew I was thirty seconds too late because I know, and she told me very clearly, that if I need to tell her to put more food on the plate it needs to be when she's putting it on but not once she's sat down or started to eat because it's so hard for her to then to go back to where she was and be able to do it. And so she thought about it and she could hear what I was saying and she went to the kitchen and she came back and I said you've done well, you've changed something, what is it? And she said I've put some more ricotta cheese on the bread and I've taken a little bit of yoghurt. It was the tiniest bit but it was done and I did congratulate her for that.

But it would have been probably thirty seconds later when she put it to her mouth and she just, she didn't throw it to the floor, nothing like that but very firmly and very frustratingly she put it on the floor and she stood up and she said I can't eat this now. And it was so strong, so, so, strong, and she could not eat it. And she said I'm so embarrassed, I'm sick of this. Look at it - why can't I eat it? So she wanted to eat it but she couldn't. And she said to me later that she had really challenged herself by taking the bread because she actually doesn't usually have bread for breakfast and so by talking the bread it was a challenge in itself and then I had said to her that's not enough bread and the whole thing was just tipping over. She ... I just tipped the balance and she couldn't do it.

She walked away from that space. I was having my breakfast and of course couldn't eat much more of it at that point or didn't and I just sort of sat there pondering. I thought well I'll let her have a little bit of time on her own and then I went to her and I said could I sit next to you because I'd like to and she said yeah that's ok, and I just stroked her back and said that was a really difficult time I know. And that's when she explained to me about the bread, that it was such a challenge. And she said I don't know what to do with my life, I'm twenty-five and I don't know where I'm heading and what my goals are, so we talked a little bit about that. And probably after a chat of maybe three or four minutes she just sat there for thirty seconds and in my head I was thinking, what's going to happen with breakfast now? Where do I go what do I say?

What do I do? Is breakfast going to happen today? I was sort of, this was happening for me.

Then all of a sudden she said, let's go and have breakfast, and she stood up. And it was the most amazing moment and it was another time when I thought, there's another part of the eating disorder weakened like yet, she's won, she's won, she's been able to overthrow this eating disorder said, ah that's too much, ah don't eat that and then she was able to collect herself together and stand up and go and eat and we just went back to where we were and she ate.

And, yeah she ate fairly normally maybe a little bit slowly but it wasn't obvious and she could get through her breakfast so it was quite an amazing time, so that could be what could happen in a mealtime session.