

## **Families & Eating Disorders**

### **Chapter 1 of 9: We have a problem...**

#### **Trevor:**

First, it was probably about two and a half years ago now, when Sarah first started to display change in eating habits, but we didn't really notice it for about 8 months. After 8 months we started to become concerned, you know. Initially, we thought it was all good, she was just eating healthier, and we thought, there's nothing wrong with that.

#### **Sonya:**

My daughter decided at some point that she wanted to be healthy, and so she ate foods that were healthy and certainly cut out other foods. I guess like any other parents we thought, well this was a good thing and certainly encouraged it and it was only later that we thought that she is also losing weight alongside of this.

#### **Carol:**

The first thing we noticed was peculiar splash marks in the toilet, and that actually went on for a while because first of all we decided our son had had an upset stomach, and then we decided someone else had visited and something was wrong, and then the horrible truth started to dawn on us that maybe Stacy was actually vomiting.

#### **Ian:**

First inkling we had of something going on was a sense that she was, started to become a little bit image conscious. She concentrated on a particular body part, which she was, felt was something that she would have liked to tidied up.

#### **Lisa:**

We have four daughters and our two younger daughters, our third one is almost recovered, and our fourth one, unfortunately is in the middle of an eating disorder. They have both been anorexic.

#### **Veronica:**

I started probably in, when I was about twelve, so about grade six or seven, and I'd just do little things like I'd eat my sandwich in a certain way because it made me feel more full and then I wouldn't have to go and eat something else. Or I'd throw out my lunch for something that I thought was, like, not going to make me as fat, or like, I stepped on the scales because I had to be weighed for my year seven camp, and I looked at the number which was perfectly normal and freaked out because it was so high and I was so fat and it was just not acceptable.

#### **Rosanne:**

Well she was actually overseas when she developed it but looking back and probably there were signs before. But it was year twelve at school so any changes in her behaviour I think I put down to just the stress of year twelve. But I think in retrospect she had lost a bit of weight, but I didn't notice it. Went under my radar.

#### **Ashley**

All of this behaviour was easily overlooked because it could be seen as, yeah just a step towards eating more healthy and we thought it was a good thing.

#### **Lisa:**

Suzanne started probably at the end of year seven, and I think body image, I think she just got caught up with losing a bit of puppy fat and people saying Oh you're looking good

Suzanne, and it really sort of snowballed through year eight to the point where in year nine she went into hospital for three months, and came out and slowly recovered, but you know, I think she battles with different things still.

Tasha was a lot older, and probably sadly in the middle of all that Malcolm and I separated and that probably hasn't helped Tasha with dealing with that. She went away to boarding school and I think that tried too hard to make friends and you know, do well at sport, and do well at everything and just got caught up, not in the body image, but just wanting to be fit and perhaps a little bit obsessively healthy, and then it just tripped her up as well.

**Ian:**

She was in the elite gymnastics team. Very good at sport, very high achieving in her school grades and she was a great, happy-go-lucky kid.

**Carol:**

The behaviour of leaving the room quite soon after a meal became a little more obvious and I went and I listened, and that was, I knew what was happening then so could challenge her about it. And I suppose we were fortunate in the fact that she was able to cry and say what she had been doing, and she told us that she was ok and she just needed to get a few more kilos off and she had reached her goal. And, we talked about how serious it was with her and she then stopped eating completely.

**Veronica:**

I think deep down I knew that was I was doing because I had been exposed to my cousin so I knew about eating disorders and I knew they existed. And I knew that I was focussing a lot on numbers and that maybe something was a bit off but, to be honest, I didn't really care.

**Rosanne:**

It was awful and it was so frightening but the fact that she did get so sick, there's only one way up from there. And now, if I am speaking to her, I can say Look you know you really were sick. Whereas, if we hadn't got to that stage, I wouldn't be able to say that.

**Sonya:**

As of a year ago, she sort of said I need support for this thing that's so powerful and she also asked me to support her. So, that's what I've been doing. Five years ago my husband died and so now it's myself and my daughter and son at home - my other daughter lives somewhere else - and Alex is my partner now.

**Ian:**

Food preparation was the time that she would come out from her bedroom, and she would watch what was going on very closely.

**Trevor:**

Then she started to become preoccupied with food and we started to notice things like, we'd be preparing food and she would be hovering behind us and you'd say Sarah, what's going on? Oh, I'm just watching you, you know. And then, when she went back to school, she'd say On Monday I'm having this for lunch and Tuesday I'm having that for lunch and Wednesday... so she'd have her meals planned out for a week and you'd say Sarah, I don't care what you're having next week.

**Tracey:**

And she'd start making her own lunches and they'd be mountain bread with you know just minimal, minimal stuff and it would be the same lunch every day.

**Veronica:**

And I started running. And I hate sport, I don't do sport at all. But I would run, for hours every day.

**Tracey:**

So that's when we knew we were heading down a path of a potential problem.