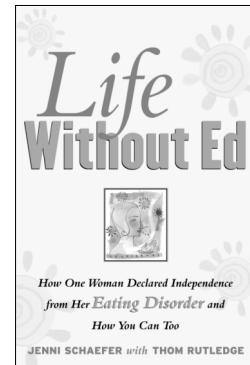


## Thom Rutledge responds to FAQ's regarding Jenni Schaefer's book, *Life Without Ed*

Thanks to Jenni Schaefer's book, *Life Without Ed*, and her success as an eating disorder recovery advocate, the application of my Intrapersonal Therapy model to eating disorders is increasingly in the spotlight.

With that attention, comes a responsibility to respond to clinicians who have read Jenni's book, or one of my books, or who have more specific questions about the philosophy and methodology of Intrapersonal Therapy as it relates to the treatment of eating disorders.



This is intended to respond to some of the questions Jenni and I both encounter on a regular basis. I will present what follows as a list of 5 essential points of information about what I call simply "The Separation Method" of working with eating disorders (personified in this approach as an intrapersonal culprit we call Ed).

I do my very best to make myself available to respond to clinicians' questions by email, so if you have other questions, email me at [thomrutledge@earthlink.net](mailto:thomrutledge@earthlink.net). I also love doing training seminars, so let me know if your organization or agency might have an interest in learning more in that way.

---

## 5 Points of Information

**1. It is only metaphor.** The methodology is always presented to clients explicitly as metaphor. I make clear that the metaphor of "Ed" is only a tool, and that if we discover that it is not the best tool for the job, we will look for others. The more clear I can make this point, the more free we will be to dive into the language of the metaphor, without danger of taking any of it literally. In my experience, the best therapeutic metaphor is one we can act as if it is not metaphor while we are using it. (This is very similar to the inner-parent/inner-child concept as metaphor for self-caring adult.)

I always want my clients to know that therapy is about them --- first, last and always --- and not about my therapy model. I've heard it said that there is no such thing as a resistant client, there are only inflexible therapists. It is important that we, as professional people-helpers, never try to force our model on clients. Healing is in the details. Our job is not to sell therapy off the rack, but to tailor it to each individual client.

**2. This method demonstrates that the client is not her eating disorder.** While the metaphor of separation can help clients change their perspective in many ways, there is one primary purpose the relationship metaphor serves: to give the client an opportunity to perceive and define herself as separate and distinct from "Ed" (her eating disorder).

Anyone who has worked with eating disorders for any length of time at all, knows how insidious this illness can be, and specifically how our clients tend to define themselves in terms of their eating disorders. The separation metaphor, in its simplest terms, is a way of making clear to the client that she is not her eating disorder. Basically, this gives her someone in the story line of her life she can root for --- a hero, albeit an underdog, to fight back. (The fight, by the way, is not so much *against* the character of Ed, as it is *for* the client. One of our "nutshells" reads: When you stand against someone, you lose; when you stand for yourself, you win.")

**3. This is cognitive therapy.** Clinicians sometimes ask me why I am not helping clients to love and integrate this aspect (Ed) of personality, and if I am not contributing to problems by "fragmenting" the personality. I like this question because it offers the opportunity to make this very important point: In my Intrapersonal Model, the character of Ed is not a part of the client's authentic self. With this metaphor system (as distinguished, for instance from Richard Schwartz's Inner Family Systems), the character of Ed needs to be "disintegrated," not integrated. Specifically, Ed is a metaphor for a set of cognitive beliefs that the client has learned. In order to learn how to do something right, we have to find ways to let go of ways we have learned to do it wrong.

Bottom line: this is basically good old fashioned cognitive therapy --- a way to teach clients how to reject ineffective and destructive belief systems in favor of creating and maintaining new productive beliefs.

**4. This method directs destructive, self-condemning energy/emotion away from the client.** A closely related purpose of the separation metaphor is to give clients a model in which they can direct feelings of destructive self-criticism and self-hatred outwardly. These self-condemnations are the very root of what makes recover from eating disorders so difficult, and we must attend to this directly and considerably. And we must teach our clients how to do this for themselves.

The metaphor of Ed “sitting in front” of the client (Jenni describes this at the beginning of her book) changes her perspective in a way that, when practiced faithfully, will open the “space” for her to identify and develop a personal value system that is distinct and contrary to that of the eating disorder.

In my experience, as recovery begins, to ask a client to “love” Ed because of his positive intentions, will leave them helpless to deal with their “constipated” feelings of anger. In working with clients with bulimia, we sometimes refer to the redirected negative energy as “the appropriate purge.” Also, to tell a client that the goal for her is to feel love and/or compassion in the early stages of recovery will most often serve to invalidate her actual experience. Love and forgiveness is not so much something we “will” upon ourselves, as it is our natural state when we learn to identify and let go of old pain.

**5. The is method is a means to an end.** The separation metaphor is a set of training wheels, to be used while clients learn to ride the recovery bicycle. It is a means to an end. There is a Buddhist saying: be careful to not mistake the finger pointing at the moon for the moon itself.

Because I am clear with my clients from the beginning that this is all metaphor, to be used as a tool for recovery, it is later no surprise that as therapy progresses, the therapeutic language begins to drop the explicit metaphor, as it is replaced with language that is simply about “recovery from my eating disorder.” (One of the ironies I have pointed out to Jenni is that, because of what she speaks about and teaches, she is constantly challenged to continue to speak a language that she – long ago --- grew beyond. I cannot recall many personal conversations with Jenni over the past few years in which she referred to “Ed” in reference to her current life.) One point that I know is close to Jenni’s heart is letting those who are now struggling with eating disorders know that they are not destined to always struggle. All of this work is about getting beyond what has kept them stuck, not just learning to live with it. The name of her book, after all, is *Life Without Ed*, not *Life With Ed*.

Bottom line: Just like the metaphor of inner child (inner-child/inner-parent being metaphor for self-caring adult), the metaphor of Ed naturally falls away when it is no longer needed. I will add that, in some instances, I consciously choose to begin changing the language in therapy. This is, in part, so that I can assess how well the client is integrating her recovery. Recovery is what we integrate in this work, not Ed.

---

## **I welcome your questions.**

This has been my stab at responding to a few of the frequently asked questions about my approach to eating disorder therapy and recovery. I am grateful that, via my books, Jenni’s book, and both or our speaking careers, this approach is finding some legs of its own in the big wide world of therapy.

I welcome questions from clinicians about my work, and I love taking my show on the road for training seminars. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at [thomrutledge@earthlink.net](mailto:thomrutledge@earthlink.net). You can get more information about my work, including my Intrapersonal Therapy Model, at [www.thomrutledge.com](http://www.thomrutledge.com).

Thank you very much for your interest in our work.

Thom Rutledge, LCSW

**Thom Rutledge is a psychotherapist and author of several books, including *Embracing Fear: How to Turn What Scares Us Into Our Greatest Gift* and *Simple Truth: Ideas & Experiences for Humans from Less Than Perfect Families*.**