

Facing & Responding to Ed's Lies

Thom Rutledge

Eating disorders are, by their very nature, self-protecting. That is not to say that an eating disorder is protecting the “self” with the disorder. Instead, the eating disorder is actually working around the clock against that “self” for its own protection. An eating disorder is more like being possessed by a malevolent spirit than it is like having a nice neat clinical diagnosis.

Through the years of working with clients I have come to approach eating disorders as those malevolent, possessing culprits. I have come to think of an eating disorder as an entity quite separate and distinct from the client I am treating. And using an acronym for eating disorder, I have come to refer to this trouble-making s.o.b. as Ed. An amazing blend of quick-thinking attorney, masterful hypnotist, intimidating bully, guilt-inducing parent and seductive con-artist, Ed definitely has a mind of his own. And he uses that mind to brainwash his host with lie after lie after lie.

One of my therapy assignments for eating disordered clients is to practice identifying Ed's lies and creating corresponding truths. It is not enough to know you are being lied to; you need to know, you deserve to know, and it is your responsibility to know the truth.

I recommend this journal exercise highly, as does the young woman who has been kind enough to share some of her journaling here. I am grateful for her.

A DAY IN THE LIE-FE OF ED

ED'S LIE: You must eat the same thing and same amount everyday without variation.

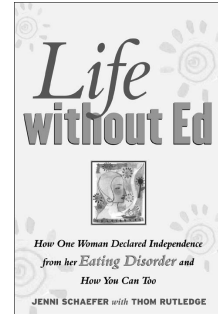
TRUTH: Everyday does not have to look the same. There is nothing magic about eating the exact same thing everyday. Variety is good so I do not get tired of the same foods. Also, I need different nutrients that come from different foods.

LIE: You have always only eaten 1/2 cup beans per day, so if you listen to that silly nutritionist and increase to 1 cup, you will get fat.

TRUTH: I probably will not get fat if I increase my bean intake from 1/2 cup to 1 cup. :) Thanks anyway.

LIE: It is okay to binge today -- a good thing, actually -- because you can start over tomorrow. You won't regret it.

TRUTH: I always regret it when I binge. Tomorrow will be so much better if I do not binge today. Today is very very important.



LIE: There is no hope for you to get better and live the life you want to live. Just look at how long you have had this problem. You should just stay stuck. The recovery road is just too hard for you. Think of all the times you have fallen down. Just stay with me (Ed). Life is so much easier with me. You don't have to fight anymore. I give you everything you need. You don't need or want people. You need me.

TRUTH: There is hope for me. I have dreams and goals that I want to accomplish...so many things. Recovery is hard. But I can do it. Ed gives me nothing I need. Not one thing. And everything I do not want. I need and want people, relationships. And to finally do all the things that I want to do.

LIE: Bingeing is fun and good because you don't have to have any rules about what you can and cannot eat and you get to eat whatever you want to.

TRUTH: Total illusion. It is not fun. It is horrible. I can eat foods I enjoy without bingeing on them.

LIE: You should eat less on work days because you don't get to exercise as much.

TRUTH: I should eat more on workdays because I need the energy and focus to take excellent care of my patients.

LIE: You are a bad weak person if you choose to eat meat or dessert.

TRUTH: I am not good or bad based on any foods that I eat. That is ridiculous.

LIE: If you eat more than my (Ed's) allotment of fat per day, you will become fat.

TRUTH: I need to be sure I am getting enough fat in my diet so that my body functions properly.

LIE: You won't regret it this time if you binge. You will be glad you did because it just makes sense to. It is the right thing to do, really, in this situation. It will make everything better. You won't have to fight -- binge or no binge -- You will have rest.

TRUTH: I will regret this time and every time that I binge. I will not be glad I did. It does not make sense. There is nothing sensible about it. It is never the right thing to do in any situation. It makes everything worse. It brings nothing but chaos, despair, death. And most definitely not rest.

LIE: If you are hungry in the afternoon at work, you are a complete failure if you eat a snack because you should not have to eat a snack. You've had days when you were able to get by without a snack, so if some days you eat one, you are weak and you will gain weight. And any failure is grounds for bingeing.

TRUTH: If I am hungry in the afternoon at work, it means my body needs food and it is okay to eat a snack. I am not weak if I eat a snack. I am strong because I did not listen to Ed.

If you have an eating disorder, if a man named Ed is living rent-free between your ears, I guarantee you one thing: he is lying to you. Do whatever it takes to break free from his brainwashing. As Jenni Schaefer, author of *Life Without Ed*, recommends, declare your independence from Ed.

Thom Rutledge is a psychotherapist and author of several books including *Embracing Fear* and co-author (with Jenni Schaefer) of *Life Without Ed*. For more information about Thom's work, join him on Facebook: www.facebook.com/thom.rutledge.9 and/or visit his web site: www.thomrutledge.com.