

# NEWSLETTER

## CAMHS Eating Disorder Team



### Welcome

May 2019 — 3rd edition

Welcome to our quarterly Newsletter. This is a publication for young people and families within our service which focuses on the journey of recovery from eating disorders. It keeps you up to date with current news and research. We would love your feedback about topics that you would like us to cover.

*This edition focuses on exam preparation and hearing from your experiences.*

### Meet the Team! This month, we'd like to introduce:

Dee Hassan, Receptionist/Administrative Assistant

Hi, I'm Dee, and I am the newest member to CAMHS Eating Disorder Team. I am the team's receptionist and administrative assistant. I will be greeting you at reception, and I am really looking forward to meeting people. I will be here to answer any questions you may have and helping the service to run efficiently. I will be making appointments for you that suit yourselves and the clinician. Sometimes it isn't always possible to offer as much choice as we'd like for appointments, as the team are very busy - but I will do my best! I have been an admin assistant for 3 years, and I previously worked for the Adult Mental Health Service. I love to put my effort into helping people, and I have a real interest in mental health. I understand how anxious people may feel coming to our service, so I will be doing my best to help people feel as comfortable as possible.



### Message of Encouragement from a Young Person: The Recovery Jar

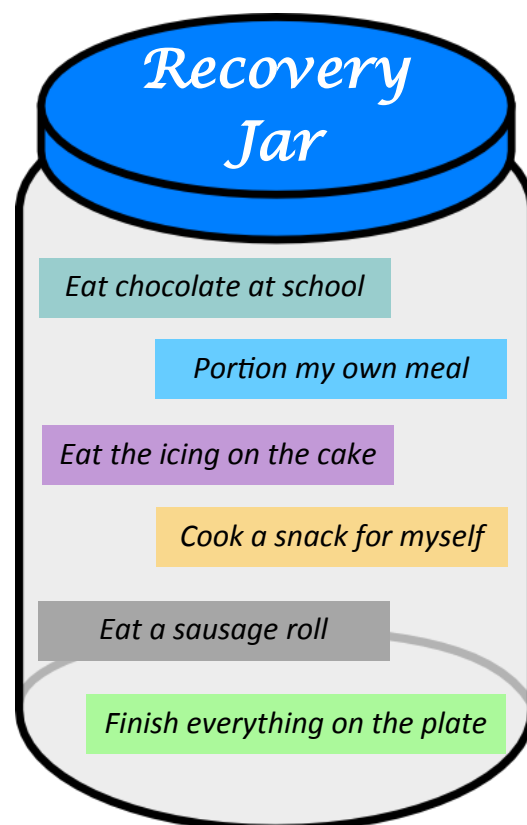
*Recovery for me, means being able to eat what I want without feeling guilty. The only way I am going to achieve this possible future, is if I challenge myself right now; not tomorrow, not in a few weeks—right now. Make a pot of challenges and pick one out each week, or be spontaneous and think, "yeah, the time is now because if not now, when?"*

*You are not alone, we are doing this together. I know it's going to be scary, but it's going to be worth it. Eating disorders thrive on security and comfort so let's show them who is in control. Go and grab a fear food or do something outside your comfort zone—feel the fear and do it anyway. Nothing worthwhile is ever easy, and you are worthy of recovery.*

**One life—let's do this!**

*You will find a feedback form at the back of this newsletter—we welcome your comments to ensure that the content is right for you.*

*Please return completed forms to the feedback box in reception  
Thank you.*



## Page for Young People: *Dealing with Exam Time*

As exam season comes around, we are very aware of the pressure and stress young people are under. Having an eating disorder (ED) in exam season can be particularly difficult. Young people with Anorexia Nervosa may tend to focus on exams and not eat enough. Those with Binge-eating Disorder or Bulimia Nervosa may find the changes to timetables and extra free time a trigger to binge/purge. Each person with an eating disorder in exam time will have individual triggers and also individual strengths and resiliences.

It is vital to plan ahead and think about the forthcoming couple of months and consider what might be the challenges and how to manage these.

### Please take a look at the BEAT information available

- "Supporting someone with an Eating Disorder during exam season" (<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/recovery-information/eating-disorders-and-exams/supporting-someone-exam-time>).

### Difficulties during exam time

Catastrophic thinking—my life will be over if I fail

Pressures from schools to do well and to get in to 6th form/college

EDs will say they are too busy to eat/ they were too focussed to remember to eat/ forget to eat

After exams, there is a pressure to have a "summer body"

Fear of failure. People with EDs have decreased self confidence and self-esteem. Exam pressures and worries about exams, results and failure can make people feel worse, and increase symptoms of EDs

Beating an ED takes great mental energy and emotional/physical resources. Things are depleted by the stress of exams

Exams and results are things we can't control or guarantee, so ED can be triggered to help give a sense of control

**Remember to put yourself first!** (<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/your-stories/exam-stress-vs-recovery>)

### How to help

Who you are as a person and your value in the lives around you are not determined by your GCSE marks

In the midst of panic and stress, try to remember what really matters: health, friends, family, pets

If the ED is taking over, and becoming all consuming, and there is often little energy to study, it's important to get help and talk to others if it feels overwhelming

Remember that even though you may be less active physically, the brain still requires energy to focus and study—it is important to eat

Keep going out and doing things—Don't lose progress that you made in the lead up to exams

Stay connected. Have time with family, friends and pets. Eating Disorders thrive on isolation

Learn techniques to manage your anxiety

For those who cannot safely be at home alone (in case of over exercising or access to food in kitchen) -arrange to study with friends, or study at the library or at school

## Page for Parents: *Story from a Parent*

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When my oldest daughter was 15 she became depressed and suffered very low self-esteem. A few months later at the beginning of the summer holidays she began “healthy eating” which developed very quickly into restricting what she ate. Prior to this my daughter had loved food, enjoyed cooking and going out to eat. During our family holiday her behaviour around food became more and more obsessive with periods of starving herself followed by binge eating, followed by horrendous periods of self-hatred and guilt. I hoped that when we were back in England away from the beach she would return to normal but as soon as we stepped off the plane she dropped her calorie intake to about 300 – 400 calories per day. I could see the weight falling off her and at this point I realised she could no longer control what was happening to her. The cycle of starvation followed by binge eating followed by extreme aggression and anger.

What was once a happy confident adolescent, was now a withdrawn, seriously depressed person who refused to eat. I tried reasoning with her and talking with her about the damage she was doing to her body. She would scream abusive language at me and would end up sitting on her bedroom floor saying she didn’t want to exist anymore. The change in my daughter was so dramatic and fast it was terrifying. She was very angry and aggressive towards her dad, her younger sister and me.

I got her to our GP who was fantastic and referred her to the CAMHS Eating Disorder clinic in Leicester. A CAMHS’ team member called us soon afterwards and we were quickly assessed after our Doctors appointment. The whole family attended the assessment and my daughter was diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa and depression. As I sat there in tears with the clinicians, my first thoughts were that this was somehow my fault and I had failed my daughter. The clinician was amazing and quashed that thought process immediately.

We started family based therapy the following week and my daughter started a course of anti-depressant medication. I took over complete control of food cooking, choices and portion size.

It was a huge challenge getting my daughter to eat anything and it would often take hours. I knew she was finding ways of getting rid of the food and ways to try and disguise her weight loss at the clinic. It was a really tough start and my daughter would barely speak but we began the re feeding process. My daughter will only really respond to people she really likes and she luckily found her therapist really easy to talk to, which made our sessions slightly easier.



After 3 months my daughter’s weight was much better, however she was still obsessed with food... It was decided that she would benefit from some 1:1 counselling alongside the family work.

Things are much better now (19 months from diagnosis) but it’s still up and down and food restriction and obsession are still there, but my daughter is learning to manage this. In many ways she is now a normal 17 year old who goes out with her friends, laughs and has fun. Her weight is still on the low side but gradually there is improvement. I was always close to my daughters, however this experience has strengthened our bond.

The service was amazing in the help and support they gave to my daughter and our family. Talking to people who are in a similar situation was always really helpful.



## Poem from a young person: *The New Friend*

*One day, I got a new friend,  
And she introduced herself into my life,  
Weaving herself in slowly,  
Gently.*

*At first, she painted me a picture  
Of myself: Stunning figure, gorgeous eyes.  
Although she told me to leave the chocolate,  
To maintain it all.*

*A change. My friend stopped, took a breath-  
Shot out short remarks like flaming bullets  
From a fiery tongue. My figure wasn't so slender,  
My tummy too big, my waist too wide.*

*Flash, flash, flash! Each day a new flaw,  
Each day a new comment, worse than before,  
That pricked at my brain and made my head sore  
A new rule to stick to as if it were a law.*

*No chocolate, no crisps  
No cake or chips  
No pasta or potatoes  
There was such a long list, so many "no's".*

*Suddenly, my friend didn't seem like a friend at all.  
She burned,  
And bruised, and never cared if she sounded rude.*

*Only nobody could see her,  
So she couldn't take the blame  
Until my family saw my hollowed figure;  
A visit to the doctor's came.*

*The doctor's concern,  
The tears in Mum's eyes,  
And the "you need to eat"  
spiel,  
And my Mum's sighs, my  
sighs.*



*CAMHS, CAMHS, CAMHS,  
In what way could they help?  
My friend didn't want it, she just lashed out  
more.*

*It was tricky, that first month.  
My friend fought through me:  
Transforming me into a glassy-eyed girl  
And pushing my half-eaten plate away  
from me.*

*Screams, shouts, sighs,  
We'd heard it all.  
Until one day... a switch turned on;  
A "Eureka" moment lit up in me.*

*Today. I eat better,  
I am strong; I listen  
And I want to gain weight;  
Recover, go back to reality; play along.*

*Eventually, my friend got a name.  
But after month and months of bullying  
from her,  
I know for sure one thing:*

***Anorexia was never my friend,  
And she won't ever hurt me again.***

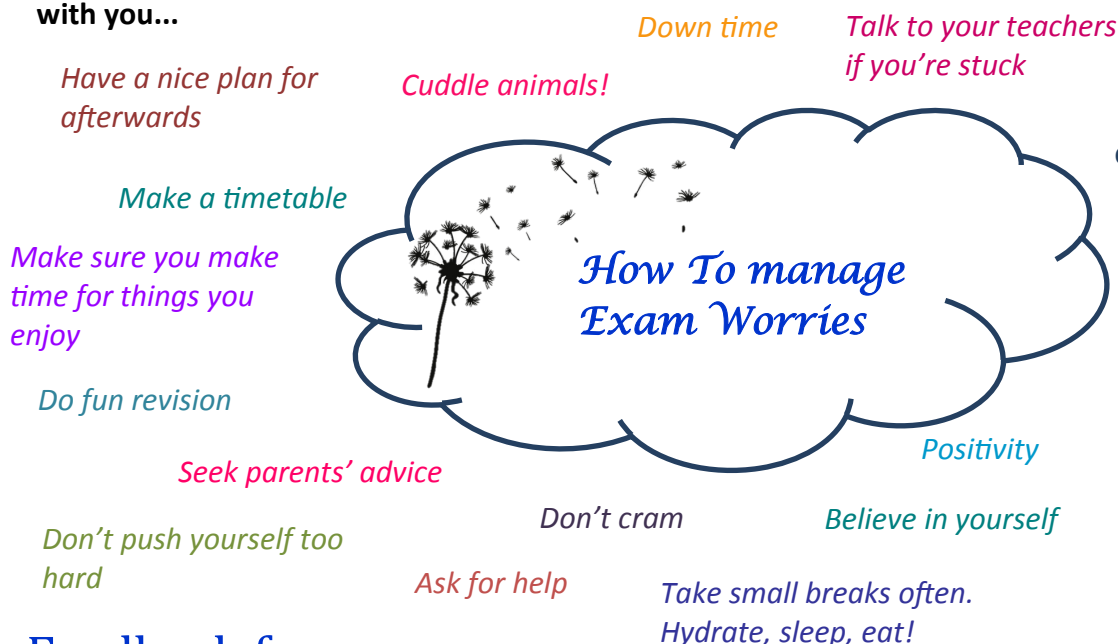
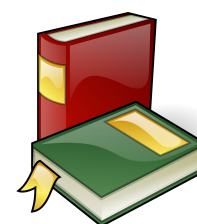
## Pay it forward messages

All young people and parents are given the opportunity to leave a message on the blackboards in reception. We want to share some of these inspirational messages with you...



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## Feedback from you

We really appreciate hearing about your experiences. Here are some positive comments we received, and how we responded to your concerns with improvements...

*"Very very helpful. I would recommend anyone. The staff are kind, make you feel relaxed, and welcome"*

*"We would like to meet with other parents who are caring for someone with an eating disorder"*

*"Constant support helping us as a family to work together to ensure our daughter can go on to be the best person she should be"*

*"Absolute first class knowledge, guidance and advice. Your support has been truly outstanding"*

→ We recently introduced a workshop for all parents in the early stages of family based treatment. This is an opportunity to connect with other parents, learn from one another and understand more about anorexia nervosa.

## Opportunities to Get Involved

- We are currently developing information for our new website, in addition to a 'Moving on Booklet' which will help young people to leave our service. If you would like to help us with ideas and content, please get in touch!

## Useful Resources

[www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)—National Eating Disorders Website  
<http://youth.anxietybc.com/relaxation>—anxiety management  
Recovery Record Eating Disorder Management —App  
<http://feedyourinstinct.com.au/>

'Eva Musby' Clips— YouTube  
[www.feast-ed.org/](http://www.feast-ed.org/)  
Rise up and Recover—App