



## Dr Elizabeth McNaught

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Dear Friend,

I doubt that you want other people interfering in your life, you want to be in control. So please read on and see how you can make your own decisions about your own body.

When you go in to see the doctor you will probably be told what will happen to your body if you keep on with your eating disorder. You might be told about how your bones will weaken, you may become infertile so you can never have children, you may develop diabetes if you are binge eating, and your teeth may decay if you make yourself sick. Of course, you may not have that future, because if you keep living with your eating disorder and not eating properly your heart could stop working and you will suddenly die.

You may not want to listen when your doctor tells you all of this. So, why would you listen to me? Well, I'm not just another doctor, I am someone who has also gone through it myself. I wouldn't listen to my doctor. I wanted to control my own life. But I was kidding myself. I wasn't in control. Anorexia was controlling me, it's like a bully that won't leave you alone.

However far you continue with the eating disorder, it won't be enough. You can't eat so little that it will silence the bully enough. You will never be thin enough. You will never be liked enough. But you will damage your life enough to wish that these years had never happened. You will push your friends away enough that you feel you have no-one your own age to turn to. You will damage your family enough that your home will become a battleground where everyone loses.

How I wish I had stood up to that bully and taken back control of my life. How I wish I had not lost all those teenage years when I should have been out having fun. How I wish I had not caused my family so much pain. How I wish I had not let the thought patterns become so fixed in my mind that I couldn't eat.

But you have a choice today.

You can believe the lie of the bully. You can carry on being deceived into thinking that using food, or the avoidance of it, to deal with your emotions puts you in control. Or you can fight back, fight against those lies, and live in the truth. Your family will support you, your true friends will stand with you, the doctors will help you. But it has to begin with you. It's your choice. You can choose to fight as the strong, powerful person you are, or to give in and let the bully of an eating disorder take over your life.

How I wish I could be you again, sat in this waiting room. How I wish I could make that choice again. I'd choose life. I'd choose to fight the thoughts and feelings that made me not want to eat. I'd choose to work with the doctors, not against them.

Well, you have that choice right now. You can tell the doctor that you want to fight for your life. You can ask for help to deal with the reasons why you started wanting to control what you eat, the hurts you've experienced, the way you feel about yourself. You can tell the doctor that meal plans and weight targets will not be enough, and that you need help to deal with the causes not just the symptoms. Perhaps you'll need to fight for this help, because it's not easy for a doctor to ensure you get it. And perhaps that will be your first step of fighting for control of your life.

It's up to you. It's your choice.

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