

## Walking the tightrope of eating disorders: a parent's guide

- The Priory Group has produced a parent's guide to eating disorders
- 725,000 people in the UK are affected by an eating disorder ([B-eat report](#))
- Priory speaks to two young female sufferers of Anorexia and Bulimia
- There is found to be a biological vulnerability in people who develop these illnesses (not sure what this means and it may need clarifying?)

The Priory Group, the UK's largest provider of eating disorder treatments outside the NHS, has produced a guide for parents on helping children vulnerable to developing eating disorders.

It includes advice from Priory child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr Pippa Hugo, one of the UK's leading authorities on eating disorders in young people. The guide contains advice for mothers and fathers on how to approach the subject with their children, how to recognise the signs associated with eating disorders, what treatments are available and where to access them.

As the reported cases of eating disorders in young people rise, Dr Hugo says it's important for parents to know how they can broach the subject without alienating their child. The earlier parents can intervene, and encourage their child to seek help, the better.

It's less commonly known that eating disorders are classed as serious mental illnesses, and if left untreated, there can be serious repercussions for sufferers. Although there are various triggers, adolescents can often feel under pressure to diet. . Those who develop eating disorders often have a biological vulnerability to developing them (not entirely what this means? Might need explaining)

Dr Hugo, who is based at Priory's Roehampton hospital in south-west London, stressed the importance to a child of parental support where eating disorders are an issue: "Children with eating disorders often become lonely and isolated, but those who recover cite the love and support from family and friends as being vital to their recovery. It is also important for those parents caring for children with eating disorders to receive support as they frequently feel helpless, confused, frustrated, despairing and angry. Whilst families are not the cause of the eating disorder, they are crucial in the recovery."

### Hannah's story

"I made myself sick for the first time in the summer holidays, just because I felt guilty for eating a packet of crisps. I gradually got worse to a point where I would weigh myself after every single mouthful of food. If I hadn't gained anything I would go back and eat more. When I hit the point where the scales would go up by one pound, I would use that as justification to make myself sick. All I saw in the mirror was a fat girl. The food I was eating wasn't particularly unhealthy, but in my mind if it wasn't fruit or vegetables - it was bad."



## Natalie's story

“My parents didn't notice for a while. They could see that I was losing weight but didn't realise how. I would make a bowl of Weetabix in the morning with very little milk, mush it up together, and spoon most of it into the bin. I would then smear the rest of it around the bowl and leave it, so when my mum saw the bowl in the kitchen it looked as if I had eaten.”

Read the full parental guide including Hannah and Natalie's full stories on the Priory website here.



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## Notes to editor

For further information about Priory Group: <http://www.priorygroup.com/>

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## About the Priory Group

Priory is the leading provider of behavioural care in the UK.

We organise ourselves into four divisions – healthcare, education and children's services, adult care and older people's care – which together support the needs of more than 30,000 people every year.

Our purpose is to make a real and lasting difference for everyone we support.

Priory is dedicated to helping people to improve their health and wellbeing. We understand that in order for people to achieve high quality clinical and educational outcomes they need individually tailored programmes, suiting their specific needs.

The Priory Group has established an unrivalled reputation for delivering a real and lasting difference for its service users.