



## APPENDIX

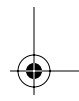
### *A Note About Eating Disorders*

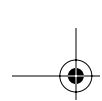
Chances are that someone reading this book is struggling with an eating disorder. Very simply, this means any “disordered” relationship with food. Anorexia (denying the body food) and bulimia (eating—or sometimes overeating—and then purging the body of food) are the most widely known, but people can also have an eating disorder not otherwise specified (known as EDNOS). Conservative estimates tell us that five to ten million women are battling various types of eating disorders in the United States alone.

How do I know if I am one of them?

First of all, there is a definite difference between dieting and having an eating disorder. Although the term *dieting* can be used to describe dangerous eating habits, here I am simply referring to dieting as changing one’s diet to make it more nutritious for the sake of improving your health. Dieting is about losing a reasonable amount of weight in a healthy way in order to do something beneficial for your body. Though it may be hidden behind the excuse of dieting, an eating disorder is based on the belief that food and eating (or lack of eating) are the key to changing one’s entire life. Food becomes an enemy instead of a way to nourish the body.

Sometimes an eating disorder comes from a desire for negative attention. Sometimes its root is a desire to control our lives and emotions. Sometimes it is disgust for our body or ourselves. Sometimes

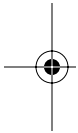




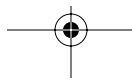
it is a way of dealing with stress, pressure, pain, confusion, fear or anger. Whether we are aware of it or not, an eating disorder is usually a sign that we have felt out of control.

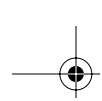
Still wondering? Your answers to a few questions from the National Eating Disorders Association can shed more light:

- Do you skip meals?
- Do you exercise so much that you are fatigued or have frequent injuries?
- Do you avoid eating meals or snacks when you're around other people?
- Do you constantly calculate numbers of fat grams or calories?
- Do you weigh yourself often and find yourself obsessed with the number on the scale?
- Do you exercise because you feel like you have to, not because you want to?
- Are you afraid of gaining weight?
- Do you ever feel out of control when you are eating?
- Do your eating patterns include extreme dieting, preferences for certain foods, ritualized behavior at mealtime, or secretive bingeing?
- Has weight loss, dieting, and/or control of food become one of your major concerns?
- Do you use diuretics, laxatives, or purging as a way of compensating for food you've eaten?
- Do you feel ashamed, disgusted, or guilty after eating?



The best way to discover an eating disorder is to honestly answer tough questions about ourselves. Maybe the most helpful questions are those listed above. Maybe we need to ask simply, *How do I feel about food?* Maybe we need to ask those closest to us to help us exam-





ine our life. Sometimes those around us are able to identify our unhealthy habits much more objectively than we can alone. No matter what, it is crucial that an eating disorder gets identified as such, because no matter how long it goes on—even if the behavior is on and off or just a few times a month—eating disorders actually destroy our body. We put ourselves in serious danger.

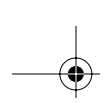
What can happen to our body? Malnutrition (which can lead to respiratory infections, kidney failure, blindness, heart attacks and death), dehydration (which can also lead to kidney failure, heart failure, seizures, brain damage and death), hyponatremia from drinking too much water (which can lead to fluid in the lungs, swelling in the brain, nausea, vomiting, confusion and death), muscle atrophy, paralysis, tearing of the esophagus, gastrointestinal bleeding, acid reflux, cancer, insomnia, swelling of the face or cheeks, hair loss, low blood pressure, high blood pressure, diabetes, ketoacidosis (high levels of acid in the blood, which can lead to coma or death), osteoporosis, arthritis, dental problems, liver failure, infertility, depression, suicide, cramping, diarrhea, ulcers, pancreatitis, fatigue and seizures. Oh, and did I mention—death.

If you have any suspicion that you may struggle with an eating disorder, the best way to care for yourself is to get help. Right now. You can talk to a friend, a pastor, a teacher, a counselor, a family member. You can tell them you need some help to find counseling. Search the Web for sites that will help. They are easy to find. Find a support group. Many hospitals offer them. Hunt down people who will commit themselves to pray until there is healthy progress. It would be a terrible tragedy to let embarrassment keep you from getting help, and ultimately cost you your life.

Sometimes we can know that our habits are unhealthy, dangerous even, but unless we are convinced that there is hope for change, we will remain slaves to our behaviors. I cannot emphasize this too much. *God is powerful enough.*

My friend Kylie would have never believed it. Her habits seemed





to have a strength of their own. She knew that a seesaw between anorexic and bulimic tendencies was not a healthy way of dealing with her life. But each time she tried to fix it, her habits seemed to rebel and overpower her.

Finally she decided to bite the bullet and risk telling some friends who cared about her. They had seen warning signs, so they were relieved that Kylie was recognizing the problem, and immediately they began to pray fervently for her. They put together a list of helpful questions to ask regularly, and Kylie committed herself to answering honestly, even when she had messed up. And when that happened, her friends responded with prayer, with forgiveness, and also by talking through what thinking or actions had led to her mistake. Kylie's friends even set up a meal rotation, taking turns eating a meal with Kylie and spending thirty minutes with her afterward to make sure she didn't throw up. When Kylie spent several months in a residential treatment facility, they divided out shifts in a twenty-four-hour prayer chain, and they regularly sent her encouraging notes.

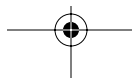
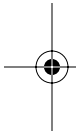
The Lord honored their prayers and commitment to one another. Kylie eventually found freedom from the habits that had mastered her. And she learned how to run to God when the same pressures and temptations returned.

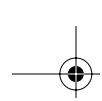
*God is powerful enough.* He healed a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. He brought dead kids back to life. He has turned the sea to dry land and flung open locked prison doors. He changes lives radically every day.

He can help you navigate your way to freedom. He really wants to. After all, you are his precious daughter. You're worth it. You are his masterpiece.

For more information about finding help or diagnosing an eating disorder, check out these websites:

- Something Fishy <[www.something-fishy.org](http://www.something-fishy.org)>





- Diets Don't Work <[www.dietsdontwork.org](http://www.dietsdontwork.org)>
- Focus on the Family <[www.family.org](http://www.family.org)>
- Remuda Ranch <[www.remudaranch.org](http://www.remudaranch.org)>
- American Association of Christian Counselors <[www.aacc.net](http://www.aacc.net)>

For further reading, check out these books:

Jantz, Gregory L. *Hope, Help and Healing for Eating Disorders*. New York: Random House, 1995.

Rhodes, Constance. *Life Inside the "Thin" Cage*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: Shaw Waterbrook, 2003.

*Beyond Appearances: Parent's Guide to Eating Disorders* (booklet). Colorado Springs, Colo.: Focus on the Family, 1999.

