



BOOK EXCERPT

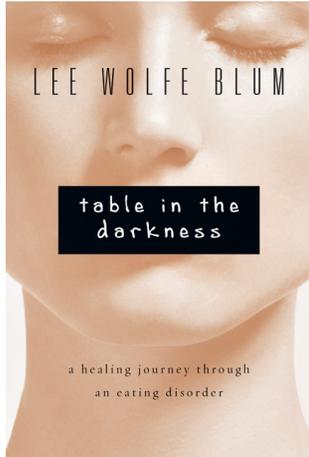


Table in the Darkness: A Healing Journey Through an Eating Disorder

Available December 2013
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978-0-8308-4308-4

Freshman Fifteen

“Look who gained the freshman fifteen,” a family member teased when I returned home after a few months of college. Those words were rooted with intentions of love, seeing a little girl who was so petite through high school finally growing into a woman. I know this now, but it was a punch in the stomach then.

What if I keep growing? What if the puffiness around my middle never stops? When I heard the words my mind decoded it like this: *You. Are. Fat.* Fat was not good. No, fat was bad. I would NOT be fat.

I stood in front of the full-length mirror in my dorm room and inspected the extra parts. These extra parts needed fixing—my stomach, my thighs, and those cheeks that were round and puffy, like two big apples on the side of my face. I would fix this. Fixing was my forte.

The cafeteria had rows of choices, from salads to pizzas, from cereal to sandwiches, with the ice cream station and the lines of desserts. Once I decided to start renovating the flaws, I walked in different, and it became overwhelming, like all of the food was screaming at me, “Eat me. Try me. Taste me!” *What is normal eating? What is healthy?* I had no plumb line on which to measure this. When I referred to the modeling of food behaviors by my own mother, it was extremes. All or nothing.

* * *

Slim and beautiful to my young eyes, she was a Farrah Fawcett lookalike. But my ears digested her discussions, discussions heard in far-away rooms. Talk of her weight gain. Her fat. Her diets.

The grapefruit diet. Sitting at the table with my plate piled high in colorful vegetables and juicy meat, hers contained only one oversized, pink grapefruit. Then the rice diet. Same scene, different meal: a bowl of white rice for her. Oftentimes it was a can of Slim-Fast. Treats, forbidden from her newest diets, were hidden. But there was a secret drawer to relieve her from the confines of dieting, which bulged with Oreos and chocolate cookies. Though there were rare times when she did have plates of meat and vegetables too, I was confused by them.

* * *

I received certain messages and interpreted them through my own lens like this:

Dieting? *Normal.*

Hating your body? *Normal.*



BOOK EXCERPT

Thinness? *Search for it like the Holy Grail.*

Everyone dieted, right? Wasn't it a normal part of progression into womanhood?

The cafeteria began to swallow me up as I stood there, trying to decipher my needs. *What am I supposed to eat?* I had no idea, and a tiny voice whispered inside me, *Salad. Salad is safe. Stick with salad.* While nibbling the lettuce, I also began scanning the room like an FBI agent: *Who is eating what? Who is what size, and how can I do better than what they are doing? How can I lose this stupid layer of laziness that has attached itself to me?* I would fix it. I had no doubt I could. But I had no idea what a dangerous land mine I was walking into.

The fixing continued and I bought a scale. The scale held me, tipped over into the Land of Bad, a number in my head that I believed equaled fat. And the scale distorted my body into just a number, one that fueled my every action. By myopically focusing all my energy on my body, I was free from having to deal with any of the *real* emotional rumblings happening inside—those overwhelming feelings of sadness and lethargy, sprouting from a place I didn't understand and so ignored. The body was my diversion.

To overhaul my perceived fatness, I began to explore my options, and dieting seemed like the most logical choice. Dorm life was always filled with loads of food. I would just refrain from those foods that I (and the magazines I devoured for information) deemed bad. I had self-control. I could do it. Results were minimal. So I cut out more.

An encounter with chocolate cake seduced me further into the diet world. Chef Me, down in the basement kitchen of my dorm, was creating a succulent, chocolate-frosted cake for a friend's birthday. I told myself it was a test. A test to see if I could actually resist the cake. *All of the cake.*

Sugar, flour, eggs, butter and the blender. No other thoughts but the cake. My nose was overtaken by the sweet, sugary confection whirling in the bowl. A voice, my own, bossy and determined, offering me this challenge above the blender's mixing sound: *Do not touch any of it to your lips.* I gazed longingly into the moist, yellow batter. My fingers secretly wanted to dip in and then touch my mouth for just one taste. Buds on my tongue were standing tall, waiting for relief. But I was stronger than this body of mine. I would control it despite the demands it inflicted on me. I was not going to succumb. Mean Lee's voice was firm, *Don't do it, Lee.*

And I didn't. Not a drop on that wanting finger, nor a lick of the spoon. I decorated and frosted the cake, graciously presenting it to my friend. A secret was planted.

—From Chapter 3, "Freshman Fifteen"



Q & A



Lee Wolfe Blum is a health educator at the Melrose Center for Eating Disorders in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, where she helps run the Eating Disorder Chemical Dependency team (ED/CD), aiding those who struggle with dual diagnosis of ED and CD find hope and freedom. Lee recently coauthored curriculum currently for sale titled *Running on Empty* targeted at schools and small groups. Lee also speaks regularly sharing her story of hope at churches, schools, and conferences.

Finding Light at the End of the Tunnel

Lee Wolfe Blum, health educator and nationwide speaker, takes readers on a journey from eating disorder and depression to healing and hope in her new book Table in the Darkness. Following Lee along her path to rediscover her voice, readers learn that it is possible to find joy amidst the pain.

Table in the Darkness is largely about your personal struggle with depression and an eating disorder. What made you want to uncover all of that anguish very publicly in a book?

Lee Wolfe Blum: I wrote this book because when I was in treatment I never met another person or heard of anyone who had ever lived life on the other side of an eating disorder. The same is true with the patients I work with, they long to know someone who has recovered and when I tell them I have, they are so grateful.

What made it so difficult to find mental, physical and spiritual restoration, particularly as a Christian?

Lee: My Christian friends were telling me to pray it away and the medical community was telling me that I would always struggle in some way. It was confusing and depressing. I want people to read this story and know that God does heal and we have to do the work in recovery. I wrote this because I want people to know that you can live life on the other side of recovery. I also wrote it so people can understand how eating disorders happen, how they aren't a choice and parents don't "cause" eating disorders, but recovery is choice. And really, the main reason I wrote the book is to offer hope!

Is there some part of you that says, as Christians this isn't something we should be struggling with?

Lee: Being a Christian does not make you immune to struggling with addiction, an eating disorder, or depression, and just telling someone to pray will not heal them. But the reach of this book is anyone who is grappling with the question, "Am I good enough?" Of course recovery isn't as simple as one Bible verse or one prayer. But recovery is possible.

You currently work as a health educator at an eating disorder institute. What gives you the strength to help such hurting people each day?

Lee: My passion for this book comes every day when I look in their eyes—those begging for hope, trapped in dark places, sucked in by a disease. I work at a hospital for patients with eating disorders, and speak to thousands every year at conferences, churches and schools. And it is in the eyes that I find the passion for this book.

Daily I walk through the trenches of those who are in the darkness that I was once in, and



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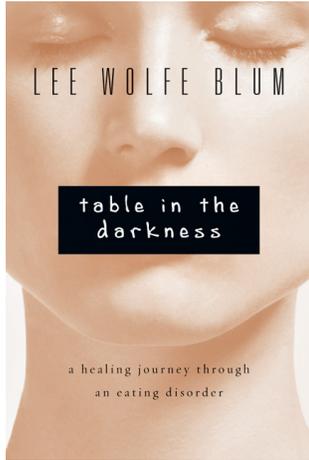


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hold the hands of those who are willing to enter into the freedom that can only be found in God's amazing, awesome and overwhelming love while also doing the work they need to do for recovery.

What do you hope readers, both those who are struggling with eating disorders and those who are not, take away from *Table in the Darkness*?

Lee:

- Find tremendous insight, inspiration and hope for those struggling with eating disorders or any other type of addiction.
- Confirm whether they (or someone they love) are dealing with this issue.
- Learn they are not alone in their obsession for perfection or their desire to "be good enough."
- Gain a real world understanding of eating disorders, including causes and effects, and understand the difficult process of breaking free.
- Learn why addressing this issue sooner rather than later is vital to one's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.
- Learn practical tools for walking victoriously out of this disorder.
- Come to believe that while eating disorders are complex diseases, recovery is possible.
- Meet a living example of someone who found a full life that includes nourishing not only her body but also her soul.

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