

Who am I Without Ed?

Excerpt from *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me: Recover from Your Eating Disorder and Fall in Love with Life* (McGraw-Hill, September 2009) by Jenni Schaefer

Who am I without Ed? We have been together for so long that I am afraid of what my life might look like without him. What if my life is actually worse without him? Sure, things are not exactly great with him. Okay, I admit that things are horribly miserable with Ed, but at least I'm thin. I would definitely rather be thin and miserable than fat and miserable. What if being recovered just means that I'm going to gain weight and be fat and miserable?

I used to have all these thoughts. I know that many of you have too, because you have e-mailed them to me and sent me handwritten letters (yes, some people still do that). Still others have asked me these questions at presentations. At one time or another, most of us wonder if we can really make it on our own without Ed. We wonder if all this recovery mumbo jumbo is really just that--mumbo jumbo, meaningless talk. We wonder if all the pain and hard work are really worth it in the end. We wonder and we wonder, and then we wonder some more.

What I have discovered is that we can wonder all we want as long as we are still taking steps along recovery road. We can walk and wonder at the same time. In fact, I wondered all these things all the way to that place I call recovered. For me, recovery was a big leap of faith. I held on to lots of hope. I hoped that recovered actually existed. I hoped it was a great place, but I wasn't so sure. I wondered and wondered, but I still kept walking, still had faith that life could be better. I wasn't sure until I got here. But now I'm here, fully recovered. Now I know the answers to those questions.

Yes, recovery is worth all the hard work. No, I am not just fat and miserable. In

fact, I am happier than ever before, and I love my body. No, I am not as thin as I used to be, but I don't want to be. My life without Ed is so much better than my life with him that I don't even know how to express it. In my original draft, I wrote that my life is a million times better, but it is actually much better than that.

I finally know who I am without Ed, and I learn more and more about myself every day. I will never stop learning. Some of the things I have learned: I am funnier than I thought; I am more intuitive than I believed. I am more in love with life than I ever imagined possible. The list goes on and on.

If you are still in that wondering ("Who am I without Ed?") phase, you might not be able to fully grasp what I'm saying here. I know I couldn't when I was in your shoes. Like me, you will have to take that leap of faith that recovery is going to be worth it for you. Even though I've been through it, I know I cannot completely convince you right now--no one was able to convince me. But you will get there and experience it for yourself if you keep walking. Then you will know. So keep on walking and wondering. Walk and wonder all the way to freedom.

Appointed to the Ambassador Council of the National Eating Disorders Association, Jenni Schaefer is a singer/songwriter, speaker, and the author of *Life Without Ed: How One Woman Declared Independence from Her Eating Disorder and How You Can Too* (McGraw-Hill) and *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me: Recover from Your Eating Disorder and Fall in Love with Life* (McGraw-Hill, September 2009). She is a consultant with the Center For Change in Orem, UT. For more information, visit www.jennischaefer.com.