



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

PIC

People Have No Idea How Complex Eating Disorders Are, According to Author

PEOPLE experiencing eating disorders can struggle to get the help they need because most people have no idea how complex it is, according to a Scottish author.

Tina McGuff has joined with anti-discrimination programme See Me this Eating Disorder Awareness Week (starts MON 27th), to call for a change in the way people support those close to them.

For Tina, her eating disorder felt like it became her best friend when she was distressed, despite becoming so ill she had to be hospitalised to save her life.

Together with See Me she wants to see people getting the right help and treatment from healthcare, with early intervention vital to people making a recovery. This has been highlighted as the key issue during the awareness week, by eating disorder charity B-eat.

Mrs McGuff, 47, who wrote about her experiences in her book *Seconds to Snap*, first started experiencing an eating disorder when she was on holiday as a teenager and thought someone had indicated her bum was big.

At the time she had never heard of anorexia, but found herself restricting her food and hiding what she was doing from people close to her, as her eating disorder became a coping mechanism.

She said: "There was no way I would I have asked for help, quite the opposite. I felt that would be giving up my best friend and relinquishing this huge control I had gained. I thought I was fooling everyone when in fact my mum was constantly calling the doctors. But as I was 16 there was nothing they could do until I asked for help.

“Eventually I became so ill I was sectioned into an adult psychiatric unit under the mental health act to save my life.”

When she finally did receive help Tina, from Dundee, was given medication for her anxiety, but because her body was so malnourished she found it difficult to understand the treatment she was being given.

Despite this she was able to make a recovery, and credits that to the great treatment she received. However she is concerned that other people are not getting the help they need and that attitudes towards eating disorders are not changing enough.

She said: “Without question I would have died without the help I got, so I’m forever grateful. But there needs to be a whole shift in perceptions around mental health.

“No one should ever have to wait months and months for help as you can deteriorate very quickly. Early intervention is key to recovery.

“If you went to hospital with a broken leg there is no way you would be turned away and you shouldn’t be for an eating disorder as it’s an emergency and causes huge pain and distress. So many people can’t access treatment and are sent away, it’s shocking.

“I have conversations with people who tell me they have no idea how complex an issue this is and just assumed you just had to have a good meal to sort it.”

See Me director Calum Irving has said that early intervention is vital in helping people to recover and everyone has to take eating disorders seriously.

He said: “Eating disorders are very serious, but unfortunately people who experience them can be dismissed by those closest to them, or made to feel like they are doing it to themselves.

“Blaming someone for being unwell will not help them to get better, but talking to them, not judging and listening to why they are struggling can make a difference.

“It isn’t easy to talk to someone close to you if you’re worried they are experiencing an eating disorder, but it is so important. Ask them if they are okay and what they are feeling.”

ENDS...

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. See Me is Scotland's National programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination, enabling people who experience mental health problems to live fulfilled lives.

We do this by:

- Mobilising people to work together and lead a movement to end mental health stigma and discrimination
 - Working with people to change negative behaviour towards those with mental health problems
 - Ensuring that the human rights of people with mental health problems are respected and upheld
2. Follow See Me on Twitter @seemescotland or find us on Facebook: Facebook/seemescotland, <http://seemescotland.tumblr.com/>, <https://medium.com/@seemescotland>, or at www.seemescotland.org
 3. See Me is managed by SAMH and the Mental Health Foundation and funded by Scottish Government and Comic Relief
 4. We work in partnerships with VOX, the Scottish Mental Health Cooperative and the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival to bring about a meaningful change in behaviours.



