

I hate that word “fine.” It’s the answer everyone uses even if their lives are falling apart all around them. A comfortable answer, and one that slides right by. But inside I am broken and tearing myself apart. I wear a mask; I’ve worn it my entire life. It’s my safety net and if I appear “fine” no one will ask so I don’t have to tell.

During 1995 and 1996, my Anorexia had such a grip I went from a healthy 144 pounds, all the way down to 94 pounds. My coworkers still have the picture they took on that day so long ago. The day I was thrown a lifeline. When I had my intervention, I felt angry and betrayed. I was FINE. But the reality was, my life was falling apart around me.

My Disease, My Friend

Every day I would have \$10. I put five in the gas tank and spent the rest on a large fat free mocha with triple shot. That was my breakfast and lunch. After coming home, I would eat an absolutely fat free dinner. Ramen noodle-like things that were fat free, fat free Snackwell cookies, and some baby carrots I would consume at a pretty fast rate. Having someone see me eat something made me feel ashamed, betrayed, raw and fearful.

Then I would take an entire box of laxatives. The whole 30 pills in the metallic pink box. As I waited for the laxatives to kick in, I would ride 30 miles on my stationary bike. Then turn on the music and do a half an hour worth of aerobics and 6000 leg stretches. It took approximately an hour and a half, and usually the laxatives took effect about 2 hours after taking them.

Over the course of a year, my co workers were finally realizing that something



was wrong. VERY wrong. I had lost an immense amount of weight, wouldn’t eat, and I was pale as hell. I had even fainted one time, nearly hitting my head and busting it wide open. My bosses, Mary and Barb, would talk to me about their fears. I would make up some sort of excuse and sometimes it just didn’t fly. They suspected an eating disorder—had for quite some time.

I felt angry.

I don’t know why that made me feel angry, maybe because the cat was out of the bag. Finally, when my Mom saw me changing, she had had a realization. She was looking at someone from a concentration camp. She called my bosses, Barb and Mary, and they would share about my day from their perspective.

But I was thin. I was 98 pounds and losing. I can’t tell you how happy I was when I went onto the scale and only 2, not 3 numbers showed up. In my mind I was winning and I don’t know how far it would have gone before I ended losing weight. A part of me wonders if I ever would have stopped.

When I wanted to die, things changed. Drastically.

It was May 7th, 1996, and my life was going to turn around forever.

The “Conference”

I had been told we were having a conference at work. I had a feeling maybe I was going to lose my job because they had so many pay cuts. I loved it there with Barb and Mary and the whole crew. It would break my heart to lose my job.

The first thought that entered my head when I saw all of them, AND my family sitting there, was “Oh my God.”

Everyone was already in the conference room when I arrived. They closed the whole Advisory Center down for the conference. It wasn’t like them to do that. I thought for sure maybe someone either died, or I was going to lose my job.

As I opened the door I saw them all standing there. I had my coffee and school books in hand. I wanted them to think I was attending classes, which I had not been doing for quite some time. I had become so overwhelmed with life that I just lied about everything. Anything to cover my tracks and save what I thought was my best friend: Anorexia.

The first thought that entered my head when I saw all of them, AND my family sitting there, was “Oh my God.” I had no idea what an intervention was, so I didn’t start out being angry; I was just confused. My stepmom was there, all the way from Seattle. My Mom, sister Patty, and brother were there, and the entire Center staff.



I remember it clearly—the chairs were in a circle. Everyone stood up when I walked in and then I noticed: Even my boss was there. I felt scared, betrayed, worried, loved, angry, hurt....what was this? A “Beat up Nancy” session.

They asked me to sit next to my mother. I wanted to stand, but I sat down and the tension in the room was higher than Heaven. It was quiet for quite some time, an awkward silence, deafening.

I had an inkling what they were doing. Earlier that week I had been in the cardiac Intensive Care at Tacoma General because my heart beat was 40, barely enough to reach my brain. That might have been what ultimately told them that I needed help and I needed it now.

I wondered how mom got time off from work.

“Dont worry about it.”

“Where is Jenny?”

“She’s with Kathy.”

I looked around the room in awe and a fear that I can’t quite put into words. Some of my coworkers smiled caringly at me while others looked down at the papers in front of them. I looked over at my sister Patty, who also had a paper. I was confused. I had a kaleidoscope of feelings, from downright petrified, to irate.

I was fine, remember? I was fine.

Around the room it went, each person going through how what I was going through affected them. I had no idea that my choices made them feel this way. I felt to blame, like I was this horrible person for putting them through what I did. Denying them every time they reached out to help me.

My Lying Mirror

There were bottom lines. Had I not gotten help, I would lose my job. Had I not gotten help, I’d lose my car. Had I not gotten help, I wasn’t welcome at my Dad’s house. Had I not gotten help, I couldn’t go home.

“I can no longer watch you die,” Mom said.

Die? What was she talking about?? What were THEY talking about. I hid it so well! How did they know? Had I really lost THAT much weight?

Mary gave me a picture taken at work the week before. I saw someone barely alive. It was just the shell of a person. Barely walking around conscious. That’s not what I saw when I looked in the mirror I swear!

I was confused, touched, afraid, taken aback at the reality of the picture and how it differed from what I saw in the mirror. How could a mirror lie? Guess I was lied to all along by this vicious demon that stole my childhood and was about to take my life.

I heard their words, and how much I meant to their lives, and how I changed the mood of the advisory room because I brought in such “sunshine.”

After hearing the devastating letters from my parents and sister, I had no more tears to cry. I was cried out. I was scared. What had they meant by “help?”

“I can no longer watch you die,” Mom said.

The plan was to drive up to Ballard on Sunday and admit me into an Inpatient treatment center for 2 weeks. That’s what lay before me. Ballard even had a bed ready for me.

I looked around me at the people I loved and I knew what the answer it had to be. I needed help or I was going to die.

When I finished the program, they had me come into the conference room again. My coworkers and family were there. This time, instead of sharing what they were feeling, I addressed them one by one and told them how much their decision to have an Intervention for me meant. And it meant the world.

Oh sure, I was angry at the time, but it took some therapy and understanding to realize how bold, and courageous they were to give me that chance at life. And I took it. They will always be Angels to me because on that spring day of 1996, they chose to throw in a life line. I was drowning and nearly gone. I grabbed hold and I held on tight.

It was worth it.



Nancybratt has fought for her recovery from Anorexia for more than 30 years. You can find more of [this post](http://nancybratt.xanga.com) on her blog on Xanga: <http://nancybratt.xanga.com>.

Nancy shares her experiences in recovery to help people understand eating disorders, and help those with eating disorders understand the importance of reaching out for help.