

GIFTS FROM ED

The following was written by a woman who had been battling anorexia for her entire adult life. She was asked to think of her eating disorder as the personified character, Ed, and to make a list of some of the things Ed had done for her in their years together.

To experience the full impact of what follows, forget for a moment that we are talking about an illness, and just imagine you are hearing about a guy named Ed. Read these aloud or, better still, have someone read them to you, so you can focus on what you feel as you hear these words.

The good things Ed has done for me these last 17 years: (10-21-05)

He has given me an identity

He has made me feel special

He has kept me from dealing with uncomfortable situations

He has calmed my fears

He has made me feel safe

He has kept me from being hurt and rejected by others

He has been a loyal friend

He has given me comfort when everyone else abandoned me

He helped me stay little and cared for

He gave me a sense of control

Once you have read this list, and allowed yourself to experience your responses – both cognitive and emotional --- take some time to discuss the experience with others in your support group or treatment team, or to at least write some of your responses in your journal.

We had the opportunity, the pleasure and the privilege of working with this woman for about three (3) years. She was generous in giving us permission to share this exercise with clients and workshop participants. She was grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to the recovery of others. This was her dream: to help others with eating disorders. With this exercise, she continues to make her contribution, even though she lost her battle to anorexia in the Spring of 2008. A final contribution she makes is to remind us all that Ed is a killer.

We share this with our respect, our gratitude and with profound sadness.

Thom Rutledge & Jenni Schaefer

*For information about eating disorders and resources for recovery:
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org*