

# **My Journey with Binge Eating Disorder:**

## ***The Effects B.E.D. has on Myself and Others***

By: Madison Grady

Dr. O'Donnell

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### **What is Binge-Eating?**

Binge eating is an eating disorder that many people struggle and deal with on a daily basis. According to *mayoclinic.org*, binge eating is when someone eats large quantities of food uncontrollably due to a number of reasons. Many people confuse B.E.D. with bulimia, which is puking after your meals. The difference is, with binge eating, many people do not puke after they overeat. Instead, it is usually replaced with feelings of anxiety, depression, regret, etc. Binge eating is a serious disorder that can be life threatening, and many struggle with this almost addictive type of disorder every day.

### **Causes**

There is not one specific reason as to why binge-eating occurs, but many link it to issues such as:

- Stress
- Depression
- Body image issues
- Long term dieting

In many cases, it springs from insecurities with one's self-image. Social media is very prominent in today's time. With social media comes unrealistic body standards which can really do some mental damage to people. People tend to connect the number of likes they get to their own self-worth, which promotes a very shallow type of thinking. This can cause many eating disorders including B.E.D. It's not just social media that can cause these types of self-image issues. Other instances such as:

- Bullying
- Being told to go on diets
- Commenting negatively on one's appearance
- Comparing body types

Diets are another major factor in binge-eating. A lot of times people with B.E.D. will restrict what they eat in order to stop binge-eating, which, "may trigger an urge to binge eat, especially if you have symptoms of depression," (Mayo Clinic). Food can be a very comforting thing which is why many people with mental health issues such as stress, depression, anxiety, etc. tend to use binge eating to make themselves feel better, but they end up feeling even worse

than before. Other restrictive diets like starving yourself, puking afterwards, skipping meals, etc. can occur as a product of binge eating.

Another cause that many do not talk about can be substance abuse. Mainly marijuana users can have problems with binge eating, since weed can cause many food cravings. With this, many people will restrain from eating all day until they smoke, and then the uncontrollable eating starts. This can cause an unhealthy routine that is easy to feel dependent on.

## **Effects**

While B.E.D. may seem like an easy disorder to fix, much like other disorders and addictions, it is much more complicated than that. Many feel helpless and like they have no control of their actions when in the act of binge-eating. People tend to promise themselves that they aren't going to do it again, but when they end up doing it again, they are flooded with feelings of disappointment and regret. This can cause your mental health to get worse and worse as times goes on. These feelings can make it hard for some to find others that understand what they are going through. Many binge-eaters keep it hidden that they are struggling, which causes more depression, isolation, feelings of not being good enough, and so much more.

Aside from mental health, binge-eating can be very dangerous for your physical health as well. Weight gain and obesity is an effect of B.E.D. which can lead to many other, "Medical conditions related to obesity, such as joint problems, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and some sleep-related breathing disorders," (Mayo Clinic).

## Statistics

According to ANAD.org eating disorders in general affect around 9% of the world's population and 9% of the U.S. population (28.8 million Americans). Many people associate eating disorders with Anorexia or Bulimia, which are the two most talked about disorders. However, of that 9% of people affected, only 3% have Anorexia and 12% have Bulimia. Whereas 47% deal with Binge Eating shown in Figure 1. Of the 47% who deal with B.E.D., roughly 57% are women.

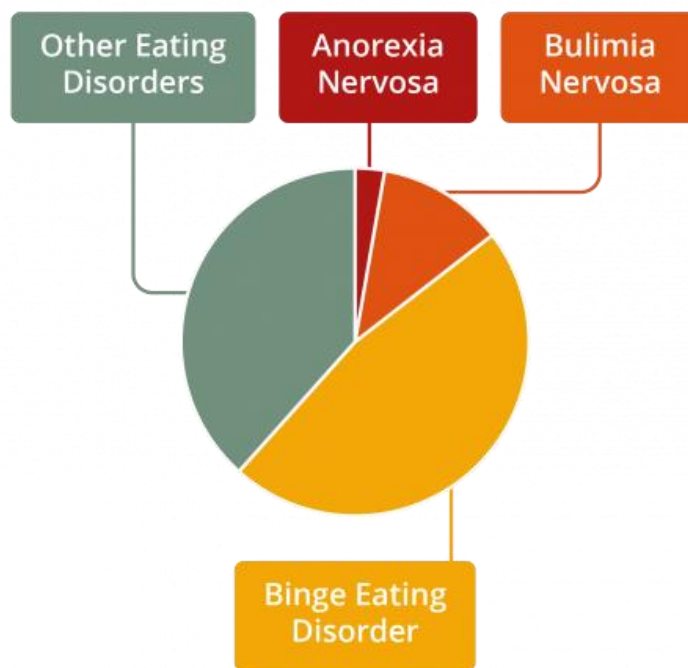


Figure 1

## Personal Journey

Growing up, I had a very rocky relationship with food. From the time I was a young preteen, I already had so many insecurities with the way that I looked due to many reasons. For starters, my ex-stepmom, who was married to my dad for 15 years, had always made comments on my weight and on my looks. She wouldn't allow me to go for seconds at dinner time, and barely cooked enough for me and my 3 siblings to eat. Unfortunately, my siblings were all very skinny and didn't seem to struggle with food whatsoever. This made me feel so insignificant, ugly, and alone. This is when my binge-eating started. I would wait until everyone went to sleep, and I would eat a bunch of food at night which comforted me in some way. Eating made me feel

not so alone, but after each time I would do it, I would feel overwhelmed with depression which would cause me to make dieting plans for the next day that I would inevitably break over and over again.

Thankfully, this disorder did not affect me on a daily basis. I would usually go through phases of losing a bunch of weight and not eating at all, and then gaining it back and binge eating. These phases usually lasted for a couple of months at a time. Throughout high school and middle school, it was always back and forth which made me into such an insecure and depressed person. I fixated on the way I looked and what I ate. I constantly thought about food. *What is my next meal going to be? How much am I going to let myself eat? What am I going to eat tomorrow or the next day?* What made things really bad for me was constantly comparing myself to the rest of my friends, who were all very skinny and well liked by the boys. I was always overlooked, and that made things even worse.

I was probably around 11 when it started, which was in 2009, and I still struggle with it sometimes as a 23-year-old woman. What really helped me get control of it was when I came to college. My dad divorced my stepmom, and I was finally able to open up to my mom about my struggles and she was very supportive of me and actually revealed she has dealt with B.E.D. too. I had to learn how to love myself and how to make myself happy instead of relying on others or eating for that happiness. I would do hobbies such as painting that would help me express my emotions in a healthy way. I stopped restricting what I ate and became more self-aware of myself and how I work. I eat when I am hungry and am able to realize when I want to eat for comfort or boredom. It hasn't been easy and still isn't. I constantly have to talk through eating in my head and talk myself out of insecurities that randomly pop up in my mind. I still binge-eat every so

often when I feel anxious, insecure, or depressed, however, I have learned to forgive myself, and move on.

## **How to help**

Binge-eating can be life threatening, so it is very important to reach out to someone if you are struggling. Finding others who have dealt with binge eating and can understand what you're going through is so helpful. I did not know that binge eating was a disorder until I moved out and went to college at 18. I do not think I would have struggled with it as much growing up if I knew that this was an actual thing that other people deal with too. I thought I was alone and the only one for the longest time. Reaching out is super important and can make all the difference with someone who is dealing with B.E.D. Joining support groups, seeking help from a medical professional, creating healthy habits, and therapy can help people who are struggling.

## About the Author

My name is Madison Grady, and I am a senior at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Projected to graduate this December of 2022, I have the goal of becoming an English teacher, and eventually an English professor.

I am the crazy cat lady with 7 cats and 2 dogs that are my absolute best friends.



*Email: [gradym@etsu.edu](mailto:gradym@etsu.edu)*

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