

# My Testimony

From an early age I was criticised made fun of and singled out. I was bullied from the age of seven up until I left secondary school. For a long time I never told any one I was being bullied. I thought that it must be me, must be my fault in some way. I blamed myself and felt worthless and horrible inside. Everything seemed so out of control and I didn't know how to cope with all the feelings I had because people were really mean. They would call me all sorts of names; pizza face, ugly, fat etc and when my friend let me borrow a pair of her jeans and I could not fit into them I thought they must be right, I am fat. So, I decided that I would start cutting certain foods out like chips, chocolate, crisps and sweets. I needed to have control over my life as it felt like everything happening to me was out of my control. There were family problems too and even people in my family could be horrible to me and criticised me. I needed to control something because I couldn't control what was going on around me. The only thing was my food.

Once I had decided to cut certain things out I also began to skip meals. I began to lose weight I thought that it was great; it seemed like something was going right for me for once I finally might be happy as I felt so useless and wrong. I hated myself and the way I looked. I felt ugly, fat, unlovable and worthless. To myself I was a waste of space and I didn't deserve to eat. I felt guilty every time I ate so I began to eat less and less. I feared food because I thought I would get fat and felt bad for eating. I thought that if I lost weight people might like me more. I was in control or so I thought, but gradually I was losing control.

As my weight began to get lower and lower people began to notice even though I tried to hide it with baggy clothes. Some people thought it was a good idea to force me to eat but this made me even worse as I started to make myself sick. I was going deeper and deeper into despair and it felt like darkness was surrounding me. I couldn't handle the way I felt and I didn't know how to express it so I began hurting myself too. I would cut, punch and bite myself as well as pull my hair. I really couldn't handle all the emotions I felt. I especially felt really angry. Why did everything I do go wrong and why was I made wrong?

One way I did express myself was through writing poems. Here is one I wrote on the 3rd April 2000:

I feel like I am falling deeper and deeper into a big black pit.

Must not eat a single bit

Otherwise I feel very guilty and bad

I also feel disappointed and sad.

I've let myself down

Must be punished cause could put on a pound.

This means I'll get fatter and we can't have that!

Food is enemy number 1

Must have none!!

I thought I was no good. I didn't see the point of living and thought that I would be better off dead but I got on with living and managed to gain a BA (HONS) 2:1 Theatre Studies with Writing for Performance degree. I was never truly satisfied as I was a perfectionist and set unobtainable high standards so always thought I could do better. Food was never far from my thoughts either. I watched everything I ate. It seemed like I was going around and around in a destructive cycle and I could not get out of it. I had suffered for ten years. I saw counsellors, a psychiatrist and a psychologist, the psychologist helped, but not fully. I thought I would never be free and I wanted to give up and die. It was like all hope had gone. I wanted to eat but I couldn't and I didn't know what to do.

In June 2002 my life began to change for the better. I met a lady called Barbara at university and she invited me on holiday. It was because of this I started going to church. I had a stereotypical view of the church but that was completely destroyed after my first visit. When I walked through the doors it was amazing. The people were so loving and caring and really made me feel welcome and like I belonged. I felt like I had gone home. I saw freedom in the people and I wanted that for myself.



Since I became a Christian in February 2003 my life has totally transformed. From being a shy, timid person who felt worthless; I now know that I am accepted, loved, worthy, gifted and a precious child of God because Jesus died on a cross for me. He has completely changed my life and I know that I have a future and a hope in Him as he has plans to prosper me and not harm me (Jeremiah 29:11).

I began to work for a Christian Theatre Company in September 2003 and while I was there I gave my eating disorder to God. It felt like a heavy weight was lifted from my shoulders and I felt free! It has been a long hard journey and I have had many set-backs but with the great support of my friends at church I have gotten through it. I am completely healed and transformed into the woman God created me to be. It has been an incredible six years and I am now on another exciting journey. God has called me to set up my own theatre ministry called D:Clare. My aim is to share my story with others to give them hope that recovery is possible. I

have written my first show 'Voices' which highlights the issue of Anorexia. My aim is to take it to churches and youth groups, and then I would like to get into schools where I would offer workshops as well.

My aim is to, as it says in 2 Chronicles 16:24, "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds to all peoples". God has completely turned my life around. It's true what it says in Romans 8:28 "All things work for good for those who are in Christ". From being a person who was always put down and criticised I am now a great encourager, someone who sees the best in people and builds them up - that's through Jesus living within me. He has made me see that I have a purpose and I am unique. Life is worth living and I have a great future ahead of me with D:Clare. As it says in Psalm 139 "I am fearfully and wonderfully made", just like you are who are reading this article.

Donna Clare

(Peter Rose met the author, Donna Clare, and asked her to write out her testimony)