

Hope and Inspiration

Connecting through Community





Dear Friend,

On behalf of the Multi-service Eating Disorders Association, Inc. (MEDA), I would like to commend you for aspiring to share your story of recovery. MEDA is dedicated to educating the community about the dangers of eating disorders through educational initiatives, such as Hope and Inspiration. As an organization, MEDA has assisted hundreds of people in writing and telling their stories.

Through Hope and Inspiration, people with eating disorders, along with their friends and family, are given vital information and support. A personal story is a powerful tool, as it serves as a reminder to a struggling individual to continue on the path to recovery.

Following this letter, you will find a list of guidelines that will help you as you begin to write your story. It is important to review these materials prior to writing your story, as MEDA both wants to honor your unique story and also offer suggestions on how to present to a diverse group. Once you have completed your story, please send it to me via e-mail, fax or mail. If you are interested in telling your story at Hope and Inspiration and/or having it uploaded on our website, please complete the attached Hope and Inspiration: Interest and Consent Form and return it to Rachel Benson Monroe.

It takes tremendous courage to share your journey of recovery and we appreciate your efforts to reach out to the community. Again, on behalf of the entire MEDA staff, I would like to sincerely thank you for sharing your personal story.

Please feel free to call me directly at 617-558-1881 ext. 21 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Beth Mayer, LICSW
Executive Director
MEDA

Connecting through Community Preparing to tell your story of “Hope and Inspiration”

We fully understand recovery is a process and is a non-linear journey. In general, in order to share your recovery with others, we ask that you have been free from eating disorder symptoms for approximately one year. Ideally, you should write the story with the intent of presenting it for 25-30 minutes in front of a live group. As you begin this process, we encourage you to write as much as you want because we will review it and let you know if certain areas need to be expanded or deleted. Remember: every person’s eating disorder struggle and recovery is unique to that person’s situation. Tell your story as you remember it. Some areas to consider while writing are:

- **What were some of the precipitating factors that led to your eating disorder?**
 - family life/ home situation
 - traumatic experiences or specific stages in life (transitions)
 - influence of friends
 - personality traits
 - media
 - culture/society
 - genetics

*Note: for most people an eating disorder/disordered eating is the result of a number of these factors in one’s life. We ask that you focus on the feelings that occurred for you and what the connection was to your eating disorder rather than sharing specific, in-depth details from life experiences. For example: “I grew up in a household that was unsafe. I never believed my voice or opinion counted.”

- **What did it feel like to have an eating disorder?**
 - Describe your feelings of self-worth and self-esteem.
 - Discuss emotions that you felt during the times you struggled: anger, sadness, shame, guilt, etc.

*Note: please avoid “behavior” language. We want people to understand that eating disorders are not about numbers – they are about emotions/feelings that are not being expressed. Please never state specific methods of bingeing, purging, restricting or other self destructive behaviors. Use language that will allow people to refrain from making comparisons to themselves. Avoid sharing how long or how often you engaged in behaviors. For example a way to reference over-exercising could be: “In order to control my weight, I would engage in unhealthy methods of exercise.”

- **What did you give up or miss out on due to your eating disorder?**
 - Did you isolate yourself? Did you feel isolated?
- **For many people, the eating disorder becomes a form of communication. If your eating disorder was your voice at one time, what were you trying to say?**

- **What were some helpful interventions that moved you towards recovery?**
 - Which people in your life (family members, friends, teachers, etc.) were most helpful in leading you to and through your recovery process?

Note: advise people on what information/advice is helpful to hear from friends and family and what information/advice is not helpful. For example, if you were a parent what would you do differently?

- **What was your method of recovery?**
 - How did you seek out treatment and what worked for you?

Note: it is important to let people know that there are many options for treatment and what works for each individual can vary. You are not endorsing one form of treatment over another, only sharing what helped you. Remind people to explore their options. Do not specifically reference treatment facilities or providers.

- **What did it feel like to be in recovery?**
 - Describe your thoughts and feelings.
- **What did your journey into and out of your eating disorder look like?**
 - Imagine and describe the landscape, path, distance and direction.
 - Was it a bumpy road? An uphill climb?
 - Did you run, fly, walk, crawl or fall?
- **Having fully recovered, what are the things that have now taken the place of your eating disorder?**

Note: feel free to share healthy ways you cope that might be helpful to those listening to/reading your story.

- **What did you learn about yourself as a result of your eating disorder?**
 - How has recovery impacted your feelings of self-worth and self-esteem?

Note: please end by discussing your life as a person recovered from an eating disorder. Celebrate all of your hard work as a way to offer feelings of motivation and inspiration!

Once you have completed writing your story please submit it to Rachel Benson Monroe:

By e-mail: RBMonroe@medainc.org
By fax: 617-558-1771
By mail: 288 Walnut St. Suite 130
Newton, MA 02460

If you are interested in telling your story or having it posted on the MEDA website, please also sign and return the Hope and Inspiration: Interest and Consent Form. Make sure you complete the entire form.

Connecting through Community Presenting at Hope and Inspiration: What to Expect

After you submit your story and express interest in presenting at a Hope and Inspiration session, Rachel Benson Monroe will contact you to schedule a meeting. At this time, the two of you will review the story and Rachel will help you begin the process of completing a final draft. Additionally, a date will be scheduled for you to present at Hope and Inspiration.

Hope and Inspiration takes place the first Saturday of every month from 10:00-11:00AM. We ask that you arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the group. At this time, the MEDA facilitator can answer any last minute questions you have and will introduce you to the group. You will have 30 minutes to share your story, followed by 30 minutes of questions/discussion.

During your presentation we ask that you refrain from eating and drinking anything other than water, tea, or coffee. Please remember to refrain from using any language that can be viewed as triggering, such as numbers, specific foods, or any other behavior specific talk. Also please do not bring in any photographs or anything else that might be viewed as a source of comparison.

Types of questions you can expect from the audience:

- 1.) Why did you decide to tell your story?
- 2.) What does recovery mean to you?
- 3.) Are you afraid that you might relapse?
- 4.) If you have children or someday plan to have children, are you afraid that they might develop an eating disorder?
- 5.) Is it hard to live in a society with such unrealistic ideals regarding weight and beauty? How do you cope?

Remember, the MEDA facilitator will be with you the entire time and will field any questions that are too specific. At times, the facilitator might interrupt you to redirect conversation in case it is becoming too focused on one person or type of eating disorder. Also, prior to presenting please feel free to be in touch with Rachel regarding any questions or concerns. Rachel is more than happy to address any issues that might arise in order to make this process a rewarding experience.

Please feel free to contact MEDA after your presentation to discuss how it was for you and any comments or suggestions that you have.



Hope and Inspiration: Interest and Consent Form

Please fill out this form and send it in with your story.

*I am interested in sharing my story at *Hope and Inspiration*. ____ YES ____ NO

If YES, please let us know how can reach you:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

*I give MEDA, Inc. (Multi-service Eating Disorders Association) permission to publish my personal story of *Hope and Inspiration* on its website, www.medainc.org.

I would prefer if my story was published:

____ anonymously

____ with just my first name

____ with my full name

Signature

Date