

# Recovered (Period.)

## EXCERPT FROM GOODBYE ED, HELLO ME

"I'm Jenni. I have an eating disorder," I said as we went around the room introducing ourselves in a Twelve Step meeting. As I spoke the words "I have an eating disorder," I felt a knot in the pit of my stomach. I felt like I was lying to myself and to everyone else. I thought, "I don't have an eating disorder. Why did I just say that?"

I said it to fit in with the standard format of the Twelve Step meeting. John had begun, "I'm John. I have an eating disorder." Then Sue: "I'm Sue. I have an eating disorder."

So I just followed suit, but I won't do it again. That phrase may fit in with the format of the meeting, but it sure does not fit into my life. From now on, I will say, "I am Jenni. I am recovered from an eating disorder."

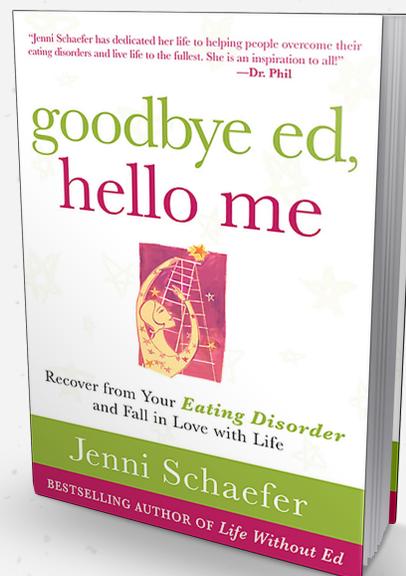
It took years and years of hard work, energy, and pain to get myself to the place where that statement is true. I did not work for almost a decade to walk around saying that I still have an eating disorder when I don't.

My personal experience is that I must speak my truth, claim what is true for me: I am recovered. I don't still have an eating disorder, and I am not always going to be in recovery. I refuse to give Ed any power in my life today. Looking back, I can see how he used that kind of power to stay in my life for far too long. I can also see that defining myself in terms of my illness was a self-fulfilling prophecy. As long as I believed Ed was waiting around every corner to get me, guess what? He was waiting around every corner to get me.

Sure, there were many points when I was "in recovery," and checking in at a Twelve Step meeting with "I have an eating disorder" suited me just fine. Those were times when I was still acting out with eating disordered behaviors or when I was consumed by the fear of relapse.

I am grateful that people who had been through it themselves told me, "It is possible to be fully recovered from an eating disorder." Knowing that in recovery could become fully recovered was pivotal in my life, so I like to offer that same hope to others today.

Many people out there are at the same place I am in regard to their eating disorder, but they prefer to keep saying that they are in recovery as opposed



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to being recovered. They believe that the moment they say they are recovered is the moment they will relapse. The phrase *in recovery* reminds them that life is a process and that there is always room to grow. Of course, an important part of my being recovered encompasses this life growth as well, so you might be thinking that this is all a lot of semantics.

To further confuse you, a friend of mine who's in recovery from alcoholism and an eating disorder actually uses both terms. She says that she works a recovery program daily and is thus in recovery. But quoting the *Big Book* of Alcoholics Anonymous, she also says that she is "recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body."

The point is, semantics or not, we all must figure out for ourselves how we define freedom. If saying what I say--"I am recovered"--feels wrong to you, say something else. I can't force my vision on you and vice versa. When you are alone and grounded, what feels best to you? Do what works.

Claim your truth, and I will claim mine. "I'm Jenni. I'm recovered from an eating disorder."

### Real Action: Your Vision of Freedom

When you have some alone time, sit quietly and take a few deep breaths. After you feel grounded, write answers to the following questions:

1. Does using the term *in recovery* keep me sick or keep me healthy?

2. Does using the term *recovered* keep me sick or keep me healthy?

3. Look at your responses to questions 1 and 2. What is your vision of freedom from Ed? Post your vision in a prominent place in your home.