

In hindsight I think specific education and practical skill development in healthy communication and stress management would have been helpful. I have discovered (years later) such education to be very effective in challenging my old self-limiting beliefs and creating within me a healthy sense of entitlement - i.e., the right to have feelings, needs and opinions and for these to be as important as the feelings, needs and opinions of other people. I have also discovered that modalities like art and movement therapy can help a person with an eating disorder express desires and conflicts that are difficult to put into words. So in addition to the individual counselling and small group sessions I attended at Rivendell, I believe a more direct approach (including these psycho-educational and creative strategies) could have helped build within me a sense of worth and entitlement to the nurture, life and good things I found so difficult to receive.

Building a healthy sense of entitlement and self-worth

The most important thing I needed to understand and appreciate at a deep (core) level was that I was OKAY! I didn't have to be perfect or doing something worthwhile every moment of the day to justify my existence. I had a *right* to life. I deserved to live. I couldn't earn my life by being "good" and I wouldn't lose it by failing to be perfect. I was created with worth and value. These truths would revolutionise my life and usher me in to a place of real healing in the years to come. I didn't leave Rivendell with these truths planted firmly in my foundations but some seeds had been sown. I could acknowledge (at least intellectually) that it was okay for me to be more than just the conforming good girl. I didn't have to please everyone or try so hard to be something I was not. Interestingly, "my eyes [had] only just really opened" to these truths the week I was to leave Rivendell. I would discover that acknowledging truth (giving it mental assent) and fleshing it out (giving it "legs") were two vastly different things and both would be required in my healing journey. I left Rivendell having *just begun* to take the first step.

Home again and face to face with failure

1979 was the worst year of my life. If I hadn't kept a diary, the entire year would be lost under a blanket of failure, fat and punishment. That's all that stands out in my memory.

I left Rivendell on December 8, 1978, confident that I could resume a normal life free from starving and bingeing. It didn't take long to discover I was wrong. My eating was more out of control than ever and when I looked at the effect of my behaviour on my family (especially my mother) I was filled with guilt and shame. Mum had lost a lot of weight during 1978. I was very aware that she wasn't well and I tried to help her around the house. She tried to help me control my bingeing but nothing she did was "right" and I couldn't communicate with her.

GOD! HOW MISERABLE AND DESPAIRING I FEEL. WILL THIS NEVER END? I GUESS I'M GUTLESS BECAUSE I JUST FEEL LIKE THROWING IT ALL IN AND I OFTEN WISH I WAS DEAD AFTER A BINGE. I'M SITTING HERE FEELING LIKE I WILL BURST - I CAN'T BELIEVE I CAN BE SO - ALL THE TIME - I JUST DON'T KNOW - I'M SO AFRAID IT WILL NEVER END. I CAN'T STAND IT AND YET WHY CAN'T OR WON'T I STOP IT? DIDN'T EXERCISE - I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. AND I HATE MYSELF WHEN I DO IT. OH WHY? (JANUARY 6, 1979)

If Mum tried to help me stop an all-out binge I was grateful at the time but angrier and more out of control later. The focus on food was not helpful. It distracted us from the real issue of my emotional hunger. I was insatiable but STUCK. I didn't know what to do with the chaos inside.

The feelings that erupted after a binge covered me like a shroud. I was furious with myself - miserable, despairing, wretched. I wished I was dead. There was no way Mum could get through the wall of my self-hatred, and no way that I could reach out from within. We were at an impasse. I kept trying to revert

to the “self-respecting, sensible, well-controlled teenager” I had been but that Michelle (my restricting self) seemed lost forever, buried under the onslaught of the binger.

I AM SHIT! HOPELESS! FOOD AND THE HORRORS IT CAUSES ME DOMINATE MY ENTIRE LIFE. I CAN'T SEE MY GOOD POINTS BECAUSE I'M SO STUCK IN THIS OBSESSION. I HAVE TO FIND OTHER THINGS (LIKE PEOPLE) INSTEAD OF TURNING TO FOOD! I'VE GOT TO DO IT NOW TODAY AND STOP SAYING “TOMORROW.” **DISASTROUS** DAY RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING. THERE WERE NICE THINGS LIKE BEACH AND FRIENDS COMING BUT THE HUGE, GLUTTONOUS BINGES CLOUD THEM OUT COMPLETELY!!! WHERE IS THE SELF-RESPECTING, SENSIBLE, WELL-CONTROLLED TEENAGER? I FEEL SHE'S GONE AND IN HER PLACE...YUK! YUK! YUK! (JANUARY 12, 1979)

I saw Janet as an outpatient three times in January. I came away from these sessions with the understanding that I needed to pull my weight and stop shrugging off responsibility - if I didn't break my “recent bad pattern” it would be the end of Mum. I was devastated. I agreed that I needed to stop writing my case off as hopeless and regain my self-respect but I didn't know how to do this. My self-esteem was still largely rooted in “being” the restricting, conforming good girl. I hadn't yet developed the internal strength or belief in my intrinsic worth and value to accept my chaotic, despairing, wretched, angry, depressed, hopeless, (bingeing) parts. Nor did I have the knowledge and skills to deal with these emotions in more constructive ways. I just kept starving and bingeing.

My weight see-sawed wildly around X. I could gain or lose as much as three kilos in a day (mainly due to fluid retention or loss) as I alternately binged and fasted and my body tried to cope with the resultant metabolic sabotage. I didn't understand this and struggled to cope with the physical changes – the puffy face after bingeing, the swollen and distended stomach, the pain and chaos in my bowels, the difficulty doing up the waistband of my old “Rivendell” clothes.

MY POOR MISTREATED BODY. TODAY I SHOULD HAVE BEEN VERY EASY-GOING BUT I JUST WENT CRAZY. I FEEL REALLY BLOATED. I HAVE PUT ON A LOT OF WEIGHT AND

I'M VERY UNHAPPY ABOUT THAT - SEEMS I COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO TRY. **NEW DAY** - I MUST BEGIN AGAIN! **DISASTER!!** (JANUARY 13, 1979)

Waving the white flag

Somewhere in this early period of 1979 I waved the white flag and conceded defeat. My very best efforts to help “save” my family (and myself) by being a good/perfect daughter had failed. I was killing my mother and hurting everyone. I finally accepted the accusation I had fought for so long. I was guilty as charged – unworthy and undeserving of my life. Thus began a period of such intense self-abuse I don't know how I survived it. The voice that had whispered in my ear “Don't eat, EXERCISE” now screamed, “Eat, don't exercise, EAT!”

This voice had been gaining strength for some time but now it appeared to be in complete ascendancy. No longer bowing to the voice of restraint to appease the accuser (“be good or else!”), I bowed to the voice of the judge (“you've failed, now you must suffer!”)

I had no idea why my behaviour changed so radically from starving and over-exercising to gluttony and sloth, but I had no doubt that the *purpose* of this change in behaviour was to punish myself. While it's true that my bingeing had increased over the preceding few months in Rivendell, I had always managed to “pay” for the binges with exercise and maintain or *even lose* weight. Now I no longer exercised to appease my guilt. Guilt had been accepted. I now stood condemned. I was eating to destroy.

I AM BURSTING - I CAN'T MOVE - CAN HARDLY BREATHE - AS FAR AS FOOD WENT IT WAS THE USUAL DISASTER. EVERYONE HAS NOTICED THAT I'VE PUT ON. I WISHED I COMMUNICATED WITH PEOPLE (LIKE MUM) BUT ALL I DO IS EAT! I'M X AND I'M DETERMINED TO GET A LITTLE WEIGHT LOSS. (JANUARY 14 AND 15, 1979)

Eating to destroy

I absolutely hated myself. I banged my head against the bathroom tiles, pulled my hair out by the roots and ABUSED my body with FOOD to the point where I thought I would literally die. I couldn't believe I did not!

Every day I woke to face my failure and every day I tried again to resume normality. I counselled myself to eat three balanced meals but I could not stop bingeing. It was just like when I was trying to gain weight pre-admission but I could not stop restricting. *Then*, the fear of losing control and being punished was too strong. *Now*, the conviction that I deserved to be punished overwhelmed me.

I'M SO MISERABLE. ALL MY FEARS WERE REALISED. I AM BURSTING AS USUAL. MY EYES ARE RAW FROM CRYING - I'M SO WRETCHED - EVERYDAY I BEGIN AGAIN WITH HIGH SPIRITS AND FAITH (WHICH I'M QUICKLY LOSING) AND EVERY DAY I END UP IN HOPELESS MISERY. OH GOD IT'S SO HARD TO LOOK AHEAD - I'M A COWARD - I JUST WANT TO RUN AWAY AND COME BACK WHEN EVERYTHING IS OKAY. OH WHAT HORRID MONOTONOUS - HOW I HATE MYSELF. (JANUARY 16, 1979)

I was disgusted and appalled by my inability to get "back in line." The over-eating still made me feel enormously guilty but rather than purge my guilt with exercise, my punishment seemed to be to "live through" the full extent of the feelings of failure and self-hatred that followed. That was hell.

Lack of support and unstructured time

If ever I needed help it was now but I felt like I had been set adrift in a raging black sea and all the lines had been cut. Since leaving Rivendell, I had attended a family session on December 18, had three one-hour sessions with Janet in January and a one-hour session in February. I went from nine weeks of residential in-patient support to five hours of outpatient counselling over three of the most excruciating months of my life. I thought I would lose my mind.

To make matters worse, when I left Rivendell, seven weeks of holiday stretched before me and the start of Year 11. Unstructured

time had always been challenging. Finding structure in external limits and internal rules was the very essence of my anorexia. After three years of relying on these things to tell me how to "be," I had lost confidence in my ability to do life any other way. Going to school and later hospital, having a framework and a daily routine, gave me something to hold onto as my old way of doing life was challenged and tweaked at Rivendell. I wasn't as rigidly conforming on my discharge as I had been on my admission, but I was *far* from comfortable with the new "me" that was emerging.

To go from the supportive external framework of Rivendell to virtually nothing for a period of seven weeks while having my internal rules blown apart on an almost daily basis by "the binger" was like trying to grab a handrail in a room made of Jell-O. I literally could not find my feet.

OH MISERY, MISERY! I'M STUFFED, I'M SICK, I'M BURSTING THROUGH MY CLOTHES, I'M SLOWLY KILLING MY MOTHER AND HURTING EVERYONE. I HATE ME BUT I CAN'T RUN AWAY FROM MYSELF. SO I MUST FACE IT AND FIGHT IT RIGHT NOW AND STOP PUTTING OFF FOR TOMORROW. SPENT THE DAY WITH [FRIENDS] AT GERRINGONG. CAME HOME AFTER DINNER (OH HORRORS). I'M TURNING TO SCHOOL AS A REFUGE FROM FOOD. WILL IT EVER END? I THINK I'LL BE LIKE A 2 TONNE TESSIE - OH HELP! HELP! HELP! (JANUARY 21, 1979)

Once again, I returned to the question that started me off on my eating disorder journey, "how do I 'BE'...?" My answer to this question going into anorexia in 1975/76 was to get rid of all my bad bits (everything that invited rejection) by starving, suppressing and denying them. Rivendell had begun to reacquaint me with my suppressed and hungry self but 'she' (the binger) had been kept under wraps from the age of about 12 and going forward again now at age 15 (nearly 16) was not as simple as going back to pick her up where we left off. Prior to the onset of my anorexia, at age eleven, I felt basically whole – a contented mix of good, bad and indifferent. Now my good and bad "girls" (my restricting and bingeing selves) were poles apart, disconnected and with very different capacities.

The good girl had become a brittle outer shell. She had no flesh (literally) - there was nothing of substance to her. She couldn't tell you who she was or what she wanted only how she "ought" to be. She was no match for the binger who, after three years of swallowing and accommodating everything the good girl could *not*, had grown fleshy, feisty and furious.

The binger was far from all "bad" in the moral sense of the word. She was literally a hungry, messy mix of all that I could not contain as I pushed my way towards perfection hoping to find acceptance and security. When I got "there" - as close to perfection as I was going to get (pre-admission, Rivendell) - I found the cupboard was bare. I could not *feel* accepted because so much of me had become unknown, and I did not *feel* secure because in trying not to be a burden on my parents, I had literally become one. I became angry and open to the binger because what I thought was being required of me (perfection) was impossible. So I tried to give the binger space, to let her "be," but I didn't have the strength or skill to deal with the intensity of emotion and chaos locked up inside her so I kept shoving a lid back on her by exercising away (or purging) her misdeeds. But the binger's hungry demand (her "right" and need to be acknowledged and accepted) had grown and been *fed* in hospital and she would not be denied any longer.

Why my bingeing shifted post-Rivendell

I believe the all out, in your face, (list the foods, give evidence) binges of the Sussex and Christmas '78 holiday period immediately following my release from Rivendell, were like a last-ditch subconscious attempt to get Mum and Dad to accept me despite my behaviour. When this failed (and how could it not without someone to translate the story for us), the meaning behind my binges seemed to shift from hungry demand (accept me warts and all) to punishment and destruction (I am completely unacceptable; I deserve to be wiped out).

I was not prepared for what happened when I left Rivendell - the uncontrollable, gargantuan binges. Nor were my parents.

They did their best to be supportive but when they got angry and critical, or thought that I had more control than I did (especially in the early days following my release) it only made me hate and punish myself further.

DID 8 LAPS BEFORE SCHOOL. WALKED TO SCHOOL. GOOD DAY ACADEMICALLY BUT I WRECKED IT WITH FOOD. MY TOTAL OUTLOOK IS NEGATIVE AND I KNOW THAT'LL ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE BUT I CAN'T CHANGE IT. I WEIGH X AND MY TUMMY IS GETTING BIG. CHRIS AND EVERYONE IN FAMILY COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT I DON'T WANT TO PUT ON ANY MORE WEIGHT BUT WOW I DON'T! I'M FAT AND I HATE, HATE, HATE ME. GOT ALL DEPRESSED AND CRIED. OH NEGATIVE NEGATIVE. (FEBRUARY 7, 1979)

Feeling angry and despairing

I became angry and despairing that I couldn't get "me" right. I was furious that no one seemed able to help me. I lashed out at everyone, especially Mum. I was awful to her - quick-tempered, edgy, silent, cruel - blatantly ignoring her in front of my friends.

PIG - GREEDY, DISGUSTING, HORRID, VULGAR, SELFISH, CRUEL, BLOODY AWFUL PIG! I DON'T EVEN DESERVE THAT! NOT SPEAKING TO MUM! I IGNORED HER COMPLETELY IN FRONT OF MY NETBALL TEAM. WHY CAN'T I STOP? WHY IS IT THAT WE HURT THOSE WE LOVE? I LOVE HER AND DAD WITH ALL MY HEART, YET WHY AM I SO DESTRUCTIVE AND CRUEL. MY STOMACH SAYS IT ALL - TO ME IT SEEMS TO SYMBOLISE AND MAKE KNOWN WHAT A SELFISH, GREEDY WRETCH I AM! (MARCH 12, 1979)

The "good girl" side of me was horrified by this uncharacteristic behaviour towards my mother but I suspect the bad girl (binger) was pushing it for all she was worth, desperate to make Mum and Dad "prove" they loved me. I don't remember hearing expressions of love or *feeling* accepted during this period. I'm sure Mum and Dad would have attempted to communicate these things but I was probably too blinded by my own self-rejection to receive them. Certainly the fury and hatred I directed towards myself defied anyone to get too close to me. I do remember that our primary focus continued to be on my eating behaviour and this only aggravated and inflamed my frustration.

One night, grieved beyond expression, convinced that I had destroyed my parents' lives, I wanted to run under a bus and kill myself. How could I explain that I wasn't deliberately trying to hurt them when it looked so much like I was?

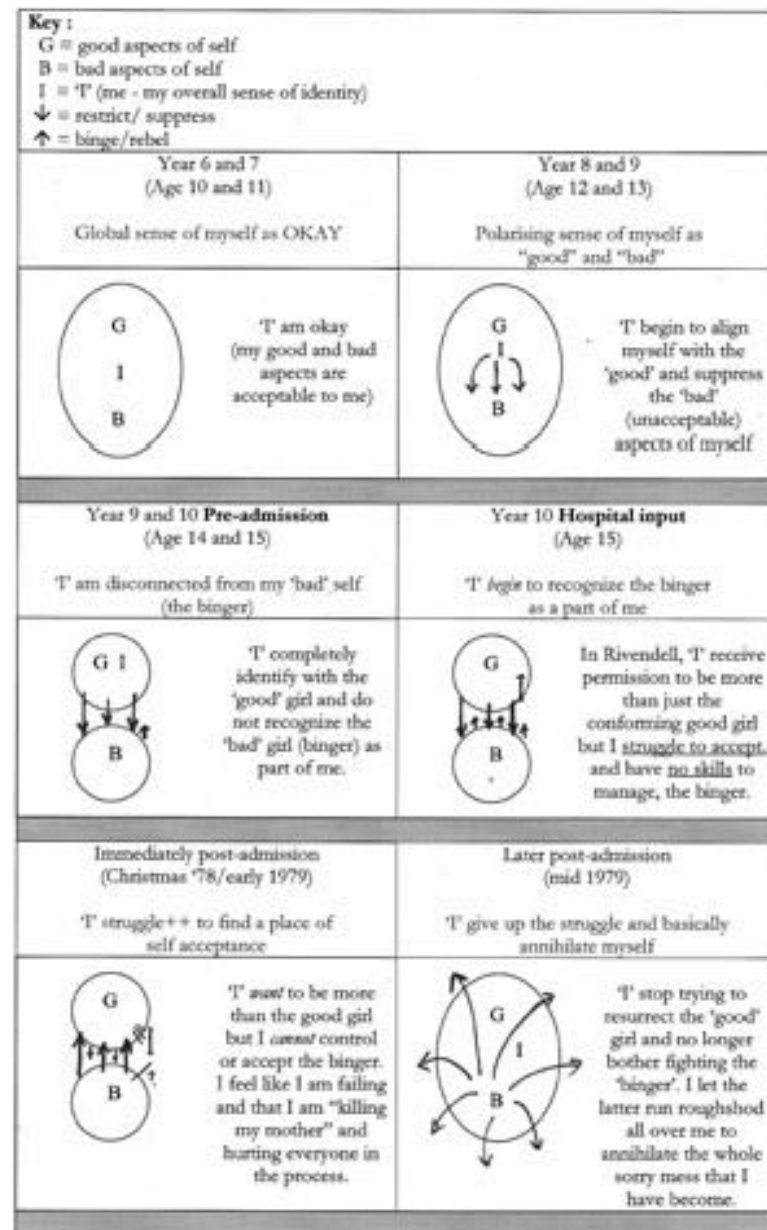
TONIGHT. I HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED SUCH DEPRESSION EVER. I NEVER MEANT TO HURT ANYONE BUT OH DEAR, I'VE WRECKED MY MOTHER AND FATHER. I CHOKED WITH TEARS - WORDS CAN'T DESCRIBE HOW I FELT - I LOVE THEM SO MUCH, SO MUCH. I WANTED TO RUN AND HUG THEM SO CLOSE TO ME BUT MUM WANTED LITTLE OR NOTHING TO DO WITH ME - IT HURT SO MUCH INSIDE - BUT I KNOW WHY SHE FELT THAT WAY - I CAN'T BLAME HER. IF ONLY I COULD TELL HER HOW I FELT. THANK GOD FOR DAD - WE TALKED - I LOVE HIM SO! AND AT LEAST I COULD TELL HIM THAT I DON'T DELIBERATELY GO OUT OF MY WAY TO HARM EVERYONE. (FEBRUARY 20, 1979)

I felt so STUCK. I couldn't reverse and go back to being the restricting "good" girl but I didn't know how to go forward and be reconciled to the binger. I desperately needed more *practical* help. Without it, I turned my anger and despair in on myself. Eventually I stopped trying to resurrect the good girl and no longer bothered fighting the binger. I let the latter run roughshod all over me to annihilate the whole sorry mess that I had become.

Stumbling round in the dark

I was not conscious of what I was doing at the time. I was stumbling around in the dark and no one seemed able to turn on the light and help me understand what was going on. For years I couldn't write or speak about this period because it was too painful. I just blanked it out. Even now when I recall how stuck, hateful and hopeless I felt back then, I am overwhelmed. This is the reason I write. My reader may be sitting in the same horrible place today where lack of light and understanding can make a painful situation intolerable. I was in the dark back then but I'm not now and perhaps the insight I've gained in the 30 years since can throw a little light on your path so that you can see that your situation is not hopeless.

The best way I can illustrate my attempt (and failure) to find self-acceptance through my eating disorder is through diagram...



I literally did not know how to “be.” I yoyo-ed back and forth trying desperately to find some middle ground between my restricting and bingeing selves until I finally gave up and annihilated myself. The same practical strategies that could have helped me during my hospital admission would have been extremely helpful now (see ‘Looking Back - what might have helped’).

A new more global (adult) sense of myself would *eventually* emerge out of the rubble of this extended period of, what I can only describe as, self-annihilation. A self that would not be split between “restricting” and “bingeing,” but an “I” that could bridge the chasm between the two and successfully negotiate, reconcile and temper my extreme fears and desires. This new more comprehensive sense of myself had *begun* to emerge, a fledgling new born, in Rivendell but lack of understanding, practical skill development and sustained support resulted in her development getting shunted at this point in early 1979.

Rocketing up the scales

The weight began piling on. I didn’t want anyone to see me. I felt humiliated and defeated. My stomach said it all – to me it seemed to symbolise and make known what a pathetic greedy WRETCH I was. I rejected myself with a vengeance and invited others to do the same.

By late March, I weighed X. I had gained Y kilos in the three months since my discharge – not in a gentle, structured way, but in a wild maelstrom of fasting and bingeing. According to my Rivendell case notes everything was “satisfactory” and they wouldn’t see me for another month, yet psychologically I was so distressed I was crying out to be locked up in a straitjacket!

I AM SO MISERABLE AND WRETCHED - I CANNOT EVEN TALK ABOUT IT! OH I AM EVEN AFRAID OF ANOTHER YEAR! MY WHOLE BODY IS SWOLLEN. I WON’T STOP. OH PLEASE SOMEONE LOCK ME UP!!! PUT ME IN A STRAITJACKET. MY

STOMACH IS IN CHAOS, I’M BURPING ACID! I’M EATING NOW! I’M SURE THAT WHEN I GO TO MY GRAVE FOOD WILL FOLLOW ME! (MARCH 28, 1979)

I couldn’t face my 16th birthday – terrified of another year with more of the same. When I overheard one school friend tell another that I was “just looking for attention” I felt the jagged edge of a sharp knife twist inside my soul. To have this life and death struggle reduced to such a petty level was shocking. I gave up trying to be understood.

WHAT A PIG! I WAS FINE UNTIL DAD ROUSED ON ME AT DINNER FOR GIVING “EVERYONE THE SHITS” WITH MY OVER EATING - THEN I ATE HEAPS OF BISCUITS AND BREAD AND FRUIT - YOU’D NOT BELIEVE. I AM SO DEPRESSED LATELY. HAD A LONG CRY - I FEEL SO WRETCHED, SO WORTHLESS AND ROTTEN! I’M PATHETIC! (MAY 1, 1979)

I lost my faith in God. The hope that had sustained me during the long dark nights in Rivendell was gone, and with it, the belief that things could ever be different. My weight rocketed up the scales broadcasting to anyone with eyes to see the intensity of my self-hatred. From around X on leaving Rivendell in December, I was Y by late June, and Z by mid August.

I gained XX kilos in 8 months!

I was so depressed and ashamed of myself I found it difficult to front up at school. Mum said she was a failure because she couldn’t help me and this only made me feel worse.

OH I’VE NEVER BEEN DEPRESSED LIKE THIS - NO THAT’S WRONG - I WAS FAR WORSE IN JANUARY - BUT NOW I’M SO FAT - CAN’T MOVE - I’M SO DEPRESSED - MUM SAYS SHE IS A FAILURE BECAUSE SHE CAN’T HELP ME - THAT ONLY MAKES ME FEEL WORSE. OH MY PARENTS ARE SO GOOD BUT I’M SO BAD! (JULY 8, 1979)

OH SHIT! I’VE LOST ALL MY RELIGION - CAN’T GRASP IT - CAN’T TRY, CAN’T PRAY - DEAR GOD I WANT TO. WENT TO MASS – I MIGHT AS WELL NOT BOTHER. WENT TO [GRANDMA’S PLACE] FOR DINNER - NEED I SAY MORE? MY DAY WAS A FOOD TERROR - SHIT! (JULY 15, 1979)

At times I felt so bad I couldn’t even face the blank page of my diary, sick of the enormity and monotony of my failure.

Sick of myself. There were a few good things that happened to me over the first half of 1979 – my old personality returned, I discovered a wonderful new group of friends at school, got the lead part in a combined school play, was an active member of our local Youth Council and for a brief moment, had a boy I liked like me back – but these good things were all obliterated by my ongoing battle with food and weight.

WENT TO RIVENDELL. I JUST FEEL SO HELPLESS - ANOREXIA DEFEATS ME ALL THE TIME - SHE'S SO VERY POWERFUL - I HATE HER. I AM TIRED - SO TIRED OF IT. WASN'T ALLOWED TO DO ALL THE "DEMON" INSIDE WANTED TO DO SO WHEN I WENT TO THE TOILET AT 4.30AM, I RAIDED THE KITCHEN - WHAT A RAID! MUM CAUGHT ME AT IT AT ABOUT 5 AM. I WENT BACK TO BED. WILL IT END? (JULY 25, 1979)

It appears from my diary and case notes that I had three appointments at Rivendell between April and May (following my disastrous "month off" in late March), and two appointments a week apart in late July. Janet and I continued to talk about my having "anorexia," but at this stage I would be more accurately classified today as suffering "non-purging bulimia" or EDNOS because my weight was no longer 15% less than that expected for my height.¹⁴

I feel enormous sadness when I look back on this time and consider what I know today. Not that I think this period was ever going to be easy but I don't think it had to be as traumatic as it was. It would have been enormously helpful to understand the futility of my repeated attempts to lose weight through fasting and crash-dieting, and to have a practical tool like CBT to help identify and explore the *feelings*, and challenge the *beliefs*, underlying my behaviour. Truly, I'm amazed that I survived... physically, because the strain on my body was enormous, and emotionally because the potential for suicide was very real.

SHIT...IF MY LIFE IS GOING TO CONTINUE LIKE THIS THEN I DON'T WANT TO LIVE! (AUGUST 4, 1979)

Mum has a nervous breakdown

The strain on my family was palpable. On August 21 Mum was admitted to hospital suffering a nervous breakdown. For the first time I could remember I didn't feel guilty and responsible for something bad that was happening in my family. It was really strange. I searched around inside myself for the familiar feelings but they weren't there. I remember visiting Mum in hospital and not being able to get near her. The family surrounded her but I stood alone in a corner of the room, feeling detached. It wasn't a planned or conscious action but on reflection, it was like I was expressing with my body an inner refusal to go back to that "enmeshed" place that Mum and I had cohabited prior to my hospitalisation.

I can see in hindsight that I had a lot of suppressed anger towards my mother. Through my anorexia, I had tried to relieve her stress (and *my fear* of losing her) by becoming her "right-hand" helper but I became over-identified with her and lost my "self" in the process. Now, in order to recover, I had to break away from that enmeshed place and learn to stand on my own two feet. I'm sure part of me wanted to punish Mum for not understanding my sacrifice and not being able to help me now when I felt I needed her support the most.

Alone in my bed I cried for Mum, wishing I could express my feelings towards her and give her a big soothing hug. Instead I remained aloof. My relationship with my mother would continue to be extremely difficult over the next few years as I forged out a sense of identity apart from her. None of this was obvious at the time. My behaviour towards her (and my father to a lesser degree) felt foreign and painful.

My overwhelming sense of myself continued to be as FAT, miserable and defeated. On September 28, 1979 I wrote in my diary, "I can't believe this is really happening to me!" and stopped writing.