



LESSONS FROM EMILY

Emily Klopotek struggled with an eating disorder for more than half a decade and that struggle contributed to her death by suicide in February 2018 at the age of 18. Emily was a compassionate person who always stood up for other people. People were drawn to her. Emily was a dancer, an avid reader and an animal lover.

As a senior, Emily dreamed of working in the medical field. Injustices in the world deeply affected her, particularly crimes against girls and women in other countries. She hoped to eventually work with “Doctors Without Borders”.

Emily struggled with an eating disorder for more than half a decade and her parents say that struggle contributed to her death by suicide at the age of 18. **Emily was one of 30 million people in the U.S. who struggle with an eating disorder.** Emily began her battle with an eating disorder at 12 years old. Her family noticed certain changes. She started to act more negatively toward food and would find an excuse to go to the bathroom immediately after a meal. Foods that once were her favorite, she no longer wanted. She was struggling with a combination of anorexia and bulimia behaviors.

Anorexia is characterized by weight loss. Those struggling with anorexia typically have a distorted body image and may restrict the amount of calories taken in, purge what they’ve eaten, binge eating or

exercise excessively. National Eating Disorder Association defines bulimia as a cycle of bingeing followed by “compensatory behaviors” such as self-induced vomiting.

Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Eating disorders affect both men and women, but are more common among females. They usually develop between the ages of 12 and 17.

Mayo Clinic advises parents and love ones to be on the look-out for eating disorder symptoms, such as skipping meals or making excuses not to eat; excessive focus on eating healthy; withdrawing from normal social activities, persistent worry, or talk about weight gain or loss; using dietary supplements, laxatives or herbal products for weight loss; or excessive exercise.

These potentially lifelong disorders often go hand-in-hand with other mental illnesses, such as anxiety or depression and are usually caused by trauma or genetics. Eating disorders can be driven by a desire for a sense of control. For someone who is also dealing with anxiety, food is something they feel they can control. Parents need to seek treatment for their child when they become aware there is a problem. Often treatments become a financial burden, but there are scholarships available. Various groups are raising money, so all facing such challenges can get the treatment needed. Eating disorders are way more prevalent than people know.

Chris, Emily’s mother, comments: “Society’s view of beauty needs to change. I think we have a tendency to have an image of what the ideal body type is. We can go a long way in society by continuing to work to show acceptance of all body types and not holding that unrealistic ideal out there.”

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