

## **I'm Not Wonder Woman**

**Excerpt from *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me: Recover from Your Eating Disorder and Fall in Love with Life* (McGraw-Hill, September 2009) by Jenni Schaefer**

When I was a little kid, I was Wonder Woman. Well, I wore Wonder Woman Underoos, and in those moments, I had supernatural powers. When I became too old to wear Underoos, Ed took over the job of giving me supernatural powers. He didn't say that I could leap tall buildings in a single bound or anything like that. No, his powers included not needing food, sleep, people, or fun. They also included being able to work all the time. And you know the rest of that comic strip.

I ended up in treatment. Throughout the recovery process, I tried to keep Ed's supernatural powers, at least some of them. I eventually came to understand that I wouldn't be able to hold on to the not-needing-food part, but I did think that I could hang on to all the rest. I had stopped restricting food, but I was still restricting sleep, people, and fun. I wasn't bingeing on food, but I was bingeing on work.

Despite my best efforts to remain a sleepless, isolated, not-much-fun workaholic living a "recovered" life, I couldn't do it. And trust me when I say that I tried in the most sleepless, isolated, not-much-fun, workaholic kind of way. All of my trying ended with the same result: burnout. I wasn't even thirty, and I was physically and emotionally exhausted most of the time. I was emptying my cup (overworking and not getting enough rest), but I was never filling it up (connecting with people and having fun). I wasn't acting out with eating disordered behaviors, but I was miserable just the same. I wondered, "Is this really recovered?"

No, it wasn't. I had found balance with food, and now I had to find it with life. I couldn't live like I had before, only without Ed. Sooner or later, this type of imbalance in

my life would have led me back to him, so I had to change.

Sleep became a requirement. Looking back over my life with Ed, I can see how he used sleep deprivation to keep me under his control. Not sleeping well went hand in hand with not eating well, so sleep had to become a priority in my life. Whether I thought I needed it or not, I had to get enough sleep.

I had to connect with people, genuinely let them into my life. Much of Part VI of this book talks about how I did that. I also learned how to have fun (see “Having Fun to Save My Life” in Part VI). And I had to set limits with work (see “If It Can Be Done, It Must Be Done,” also in Part VI) and accept the truth that I can’t do everything.

I can finally say that I do have needs. I don’t have supernatural powers. I’m not Wonder Woman. The supernatural thing about this is: I don’t want to be.

Appointed to the Ambassador Council of the National Eating Disorders Association, Jenni Schaefer is a singer/songwriter, speaker, and the author of *Life Without Ed: How One Woman Declared Independence from Her Eating Disorder and How You Can Too* (McGraw-Hill) and *Goodbye Ed, Hello Me: Recover from Your Eating Disorder and Fall in Love with Life* (McGraw-Hill, September 2009). She is a consultant with the Center For Change in Orem, UT. For more information, visit [www.jennischaefer.com](http://www.jennischaefer.com).