

# Maudsley Parents Newsletter



maudsleyparents.org  
family-based treatment for eating disorders

AUGUST 2010

What's new at Maudsley Parents? New "Ask an Expert" questions, an excerpt from Harriet Brown's *Brave Girl Eating*, and thoughts on food. As always, we'd love to hear from you. Write us at [contact@maudsleyparents.org](mailto:contact@maudsleyparents.org).

## Ask an Expert

In our "Ask an Expert" column, we turn to leading eating-disorders experts for answers. This month, clinical advisors Katharine Loeb, PhD and Angela Celio Doyle, PhD, answer reader questions:

- My daughter's eating is disordered, but I don't think she needs to gain weight. What's the right approach for us?
- How can we help our recovering daughter with her anxiety about weight gain?
- How much weight does my child need to gain for recovery?
- My daughter is worried her friend has an eating disorder. How do I tell the parents?

Read their advice for parents [here](#).

## Are you a therapist looking for family-based treatment training?

A workshop will be offered September 13-14 in Chicago by the **Training Institute for Child and Adolescent Eating Disorders**. Visit the Institute website to learn more [here](#). **Trainees/students pay half price for the workshop.**

## Upcoming Events

The Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt will host an evening with author Harriet Brown on Wednesday, August 25 from 7-9 pm.

The Conference Center  
at Sheppard Pratt  
6501 North Charles Street  
Baltimore, MD 21285

It's free and open to the public. Find more information [here](#). We hope to see you there!

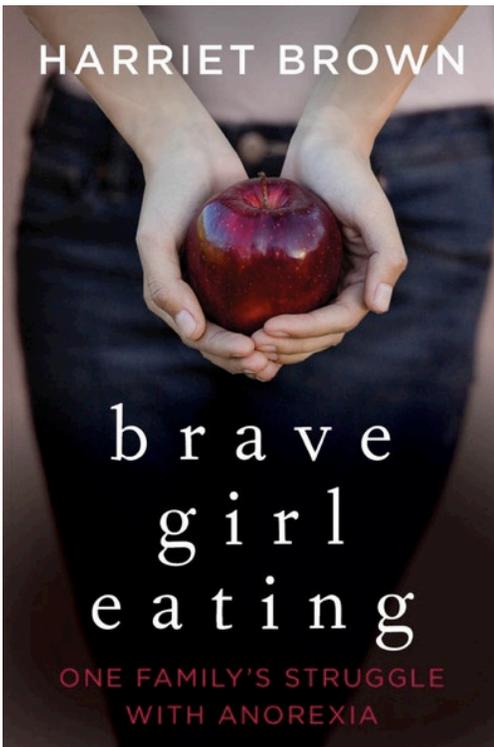
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**2011 Maudsley Parents Conference**  
from research to recovery

Save the date! We're planning our next conference for **January 21st** in sunny San Diego. Please plan to join us as we bring together families, community clinicians and leading researchers. Speakers include **Walter Kaye, MD, Daniel le Grange, PhD, Renee Hoste, PhD, Roxanne Rockwell, MA and Harriet Brown**. Stay tuned for more information—details coming soon!

## Book Excerpt: *Brave Girl Eating*

We're delighted to announce the publication of *Brave Girl Eating: A Family's Struggle with Anorexia*. Part memoir and part science, the book tells the story of one family's quest to help their daughter recover using family-based treatment, and explores the science of eating disorders in a way parents can understand.



*The last day of July is my younger daughter Emma's tenth birthday. Kitty's been talking about it for a week now—not because she's excited to celebrate her sister's birthday but because she knows there will be cake. She bargains with us: If she doesn't have to eat a piece of cake she'll eat an ear of corn, an extra slice of bread.*

*But underneath the drumbeat of Kitty's anxiety, my husband and I both hear another note, a whisper of longing that surprises me, then horrifies me because it surprises me. In just a few months, I've grown used to the idea that Kitty fears and hates food, that she doesn't like to eat. I have without meaning to changed the way I think about her and eating. Of course she doesn't want cake. Of course she doesn't want butter on her bread, or cheese in her sauce, or any food with more than 50 calories. I'm already thinking about Kitty's fears as if they're perfectly understandable, if not rational—like Emma's picky-eater aversion to mustard. Some of my reaction is an instinct to avoid conflict, a strategy I can no longer afford; we've been forced into conflict, like it or not. Some, I see now, is a kind of insidious accommodation. I, too, am a "good girl" personality, given to internalizing rules and playing by them.*

*Suddenly I can see how the very human propensity to make order out of chaos, to come to terms with change, to adjust, can inadvertently enable an eating disorder. Kitty's been sick for only a few months, but already it's as if I've forgotten who she is without the anorexia. Of course she doesn't want cake. Months from now, Dr. Daniel le Grange will tell me, "There's something about anorexia that makes parents and clinicians think in different ways than they would have. I don't know what it is about this illness that gets us to think, It's not such a bad illness."*

*I wonder if our 21st-century ambivalence about food is to blame. I can't think of a single woman friend who has never dieted, never deprived herself of food in the name of something bigger than appetite—health or fashion or sexual attractiveness. And where do we draw the line between anorexic food restriction and other kinds of restricting? We live in a culture where many of us feel shame over eating anything but grilled chicken, lettuce, and fat-free dressing. A friend once told me she wished she could scrape the taste buds off her tongue, so she didn't have to choose between the pleasures of eating and being thin. I'm guessing she's not the only one who feels this way.*

*When I look at the rich dark chocolate cake, I feel not only Kitty's fear and shame and longing but my own. Kitty wants to eat the cake and she's afraid of it. In a fundamental way, I know how she feels. Doctors harangue us about eating too much and being too fat. TV, movies, and magazines present stick-thin women as attractive, and after a while, we begin to buy into that image. We reinforce it in casual conversations in the grocery store, on the phone, at our children's schools, at restaurants, walking around the neighborhood: I'm so bad—I ate a piece of cake. Or I'm such a pig! Or Look at these thighs. It's a wonder I don't break the chair.*

*Food as an object of fear and loathing is a strangely seductive idea. Which reminds me of a Yiddish folk tale I heard as a child: There was once was a miser, a miserable old coot who kept a dog to protect the gold coins hidden under his mattress. Being a miser, he was always looking for ways to spend less. One day he got a brilliant idea for how to save money; each week, he will feed his dog a little less than the week before, so the dog will get used to eating less, bit by bit. He does just that. Each week the dog becomes weaker and hungrier. Eventually the miser stops feeding the dog altogether, and not too long afterward, the dog keels over, dead. And the miser laments: Just when I'd trained him to live on nothing at all, he has to up and die on me!*

*I realize how deeply we as a culture have bought in to the notion that food is a regrettable necessity. As if the ideal, the holy grail we are all working toward, is to do without food altogether—and as if we not only should but could attain this state, if only we were good enough, determined enough, strong enough. As if that's what we should want.*

*So I tell Kitty no bargain; she has to eat a piece of cake. We all have to eat a piece of cake. Still, I'm shocked when she does, spending half an hour over a small slice of dense chocolate ganache. Afterward she weeps in my arms. "That was scary, Mommy!" she cries.*

*When Kitty was four, she scrambled onto the back of an enormous quarterhorse for a walk around an indoor ring. When the horse reared, she held on without a sign of panic. I asked later if she'd been scared. "Not really," she said. "Can I ride again?"*

*This is the child who is now terrified by a slice of chocolate cake.*

*Later that night I prowl the house, unable to sleep. I pad into Kitty's room and lean over her bed, wanting to see her face relaxed even a little, free of the shadow that haunts it when she's awake. She stirs at my approach, rolls her head from side to side, and says clearly, "Make it go away." Her eyes are squeezed tight, her mouth drawn down in a rictus of pain. Physical pain? Emotional pain? I have no way to know.*

*Make it go away. The shadow is always with her now, even in sleep.*

***Brave Girl Eating* will be available in bookstores on August 24th.**

## Harriet Brown: Why I wrote *Brave Girl Eating*



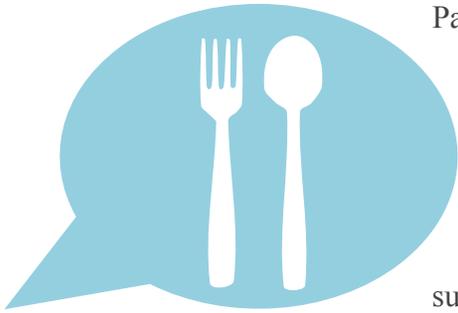
One of the first questions people ask me is why I wrote the book. What they're really asking is, why would you publish a book like this? Why would you reveal personal and private details of not just your own life, but your daughters' and husband's life?

It's a fair question, and it has a simple answer: Because I want people to know what it's really like to struggle with an eating disorder—for the sake of the sufferer *and* for her/his family. I want people to know that anorexia and bulimia are real and devastating illnesses that destroy many lives. I want them to know that eating disorders are not a choice, and that those who have them are courageous beyond belief. I titled the book *Brave Girl Eating* because I think in this country most people assume that eating disorders represent a kind of willful acting out. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Until we can talk openly about anorexia, bulimia, and other eating disorders, we won't be able to advocate for the kind of research that will translate into more effective treatments. And those who struggle with eating disorders, and their families, will continue to feel ashamed and alone. It's time to break the seal of secrecy and use our energy to help people recover.

*Harriet Brown is an assistant professor of magazine journalism at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications in Syracuse, NY. She writes often for the New York Times and other magazines and newspapers. She blogs about food, eating, and body image at [Feed Me!](#), [harrietbrown.blogspot.com](#). For a list of upcoming stops on her book tour, visit [harrietbrown.com](#).*

## Let's Talk About Food!



Parents whose children are diagnosed with an eating disorder are often told, “Don’t talk about the food.” Anorexia is not about the food, we hear. But food is the most important part of early recovery. FBT therapists often say, “Food is medicine,” especially in the first phase of treatment. So how can we help our kids recover if we don’t talk about the food?

Recovery from anorexia starts with food—a lot of food. It can take a surprising number of calories for someone with anorexia to gain weight.

Research by Dr. Walter Kaye at the University of Pittsburgh found that caloric intake required for weight gain in anorexia nervosa is high. (You can watch a video about the study [here](#).) “What this means is that Mother Nature is conspiring against you if you have anorexia nervosa because it’s going to take you an awful lot of calories to gain weight,” notes Dr. Kaye, who now heads the University of California-San Diego Eating Disorders Program. “You can just imagine how difficult this is for someone with anorexia nervosa.”

Add in the stomachaches, bloating, and other gastric disturbances common to recovering anorexics and the task becomes even more challenging. Parents can feel lost when dealing with this phase of treatment, where the responsibility for what and how much to feed their child rests with them rather than with their treatment team.

Some parents wonder why family-based treatment does not include a meal plan or dictate specific food intake. The answer, according to Renee Hoste, PhD, of the University of Chicago Eating Disorders Program, lies in the fact that parents already know how to feed their child. “Until the eating disorder came along, you had a healthy and well-fed child,” she explains. “Use the knowledge you have as a parent to decide what your child needs to eat in order to gain weight.” While initially parents may struggle with re-feeding their starving child, most quickly figure out a plan that works—and they feel empowered by their ability to take care of their child once more. A family-based treatment specialist will still be helpful, of course; he or she will offer guidance, make suggestions, and help parents make necessary adjustments along the way.

Most teens with anorexia are afraid of specific foods—typically, foods that are high-fat and/or high-calorie. It’s important to challenge these food fears rather than accommodate them. For one thing, it’s hard to get enough calories in without high-fat foods. But there are other

[Thanks to Lori for sharing this recipe. Find more here!](#)

### *Homemade Mac & Cheese*

1½ cups macaroni (12 oz)

3 Tbsp butter

2 Tbsp flour

2 cups half-and-half or milk

2 cups shredded SHARP cheddar

Buttered bread crumbs (approx ½ cup w/ 4 Tbsp butter)

Cook macaroni to al dente according to package directions. In a pan melt butter; blend in flour. Slowly whisk in milk and stir until thick and bubbly. Add shredded cheese; stir until melted. Toss in the macaroni, blending well. Pour ingredients into a 1 ½ quart casserole. Top with buttered bread crumbs.

Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until golden and bubbly.

reasons for pushing your child to eat high-fat foods: Fat supports organ structure and the absorption of fat-soluble nutrients, including vitamins A, D, E, and K. High-fat foods are the only source of an essential fatty acid, linoleic acid, that's crucial for normal growth and development.

For long-term recovery, your child needs to be able to eat a wide variety of foods to maintain recovery. Anorexia alters the body's metabolism, and even after weight restoration, your child will need to eat an abnormally high number of calories for a year or longer. It's important for her to feel that there are no bad foods, because even small levels of restricting can lead to relapse. Overcoming food fears is an important part of the psychological recovery, too. Likewise, it's important to interrupt behaviors like compulsive weighing and exercise, and eating in isolation, that support the eating disorder.

How have other parents risen to the challenge? Check out our [parent-to-parent recipes and tips](#).

## What's New at NEDA



NEDA

NEDA's 2010 conference, *Building Bridges to Recovery*, is scheduled for October 8-10 in New York City. Find program and registration information [here](#). This year's conference features some terrific speakers, including our own Harriet Brown. If you'll be attending, please stop by the "Take One" table for some Maudsley Parents info. Let us know if you'll be there—we'd love to meet you!

Are you a member of NEDA's Parent, Family, and Friend Network? It's a great way to stay up to date on all NEDA has to offer families. Membership is free: [Join here!](#)

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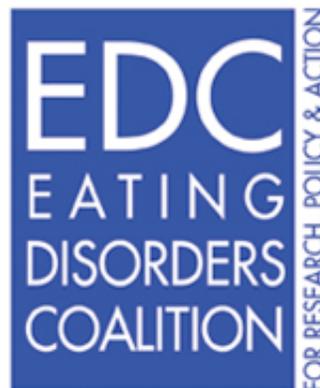
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EDC is hosting its second Lobby Day of 2010 on September 29th and 30th. Join them as they lobby the Hill in support of the FREED Act. More info and registration [here](#).



If you know other parents who are interested, please feel free to forward this newsletter and invite them to join our mailing list at [contact@maudsleyparents.org](mailto:contact@maudsleyparents.org). We respect your privacy and your contact information will not be shared.