



BOOK EXTRACT

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Chapter 9

Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Even when I was about six or seven I would punch myself and pull my hair because I didn't like the way I looked.

I knew I was ugly - after all I was bullied because I was ugly. Surely if I didn't have a big nose they wouldn't have called me 'big nose' at school.

Right through infants and juniors I hated my hair.

I also hated my cheeks and would pull at them to try and change their shape and colour.

I used to try and stretch my legs because they are so short. I remember watching a Carry On film where a man was being stretched on a rack. That's where I got the idea from.

I used to make our Darryl pull me to see if my arms or legs would get longer.

I had short, fat size one feet so I would wear me mum's size six shoes with loads of socks. No wonder the kids in the street used to take the piss out of me.

I would punch myself in the face and stomach and hit my head on walls. Mum had a big wooden rolling pin which I would use to hit my hips. I hated them because they stuck out when I was little.

In the 1970s and '80s anorexia was now recognised, but dysmorphia has only been recognised in the last few years in the media. Even now people say 'what is BDD?' But they know what anorexia or bulimia is.

In the '80s binge eating was costing me about £50-£60 a week on junk food.

Perhaps this stems back to when I was little, when food was like love. Because I never got love off my dad food was a comfort - a comfort I could control.

Binge eating was like having control. I wasn't going to eat things I didn't like; I was going to eat things I liked - then be sick.

I really believe if I had not seen that Vanessa Feltz programme that day, if I had not come home early and put that channel on, I would have eventually killed myself.

I was meant to see that programme that day. She gave me the insight without which I would not have coped. Seeing that show was fate. It was meant to happen to me.

People would say to me that I was mental and should just stop eating to lose weight, and I did try to eat healthily but I would stick around 16, 17 or 18 stones. I was big - and miserable. Nowadays it is a little easier because you have different healthy stuff available.

But this person in here does not want to be this person out there.

Some people go to counsellors which I did try, but it made me even worse.

To be me means to be trapped with my thoughts and my brain constantly letting my thoughts and my brain constantly telling me I am ugly. I am odious and I am vile. This hole of despair I'm in is so big and deep there will never be an escape for me. I'd wake up during the night and would be crying. Dreams of not being me always haunted me - and still do today. I'd have panic attacks knowing how I looked and they wouldn't stop. My heart would race so fast and I would shake uncontrollably. And this was worse because I knew I could never be at peace with myself. That's why I had to stop it. And, the only way I saw it go, ever, was to stop breathing. Hour after hour, day after day, I have fights with myself in my head. It was driving me mad and it just couldn't stop!

My relationships were doomed and always will be, because of me. I am me and I can't change that, no matter what. I am so insecure, so demanding, and always want and need attention, needing to be held and cuddled, needing someone to make me feel like me. But I ruin everything. I wish I could just pull my stupid brain out and throw it away.