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*The first book to address **mentoring** and sponsoring as an effective and viable movement in the treatment of eating disorders*

BEATING ANA

How to Outsmart Your Eating Disorder and Take Your Life Back

By Shannon Cutts
Foreword by Jessica Weiner, author of *A Very Hungry Girl*
Introduction by Robin Richardson, MA, CMT

Praise for BEATING ANA:

"This is a book that needs to be in the hands of every person in the eating disorder world: those who suffer, those who love them, and every professional who treats them."

--Doris Smeltzer, M.A., author of *Andrea's Voice* and the "Advice for Parents" Blog

"Unlike any other book about eating disorders, **BEATING ANA** uniquely illustrates the importance of people connecting with one another for support and encouragement along the recovery road...Shannon's depth of passion and honesty will provide much-needed hope to all those touched by this insidious illness."

--Jenni Schaefer, author of *Life Without ED*

"Recovery often feels like a lonely journey, but thanks to Shannon's innovative approach, the specter of flying solo is no longer a certainty."

--Ron Saxen, author of *The Good Eater*

Shannon Cutts, author of **BEATING ANA: How to Outsmart Your Eating Disorder and Take Your Life Back** (*Health Communications, Inc.; February 2009*) had a difficult journey like so many people today: Anorexia and bulimia threatened to take her life and disempowered her from enjoying a healthy freedom. But Cutts was less interested in wallowing in her story of struggling with an eating disorder and more interested in beating it. She was determined to take the harsh and dangerous lessons her disease had bestowed upon her and turn them into a mission, a crusade, and a powerful message: it is not what happens to us that matters, but what we do with what happens to us that is a true measure of our lives. **BEATING ANA** is the guide that Cutts looked for and never found during the fifteen years she battled with her disease, and is the first book to address mentoring and sponsoring as effective and viable components in the treatment of eating disorders. **BEATING ANA** is a testament to the power and strength each of us has to first achieve recovery from an eating disorder and then parlay our own victory into helping others find their freedom from the disease.

In **BEATING ANA**, Cutts introduces readers to six courageous women who have bravely battled their obsession with body, weight, and food. They fought against expensive and often limiting recovery systems and found incredible value in sharing their stories with others, using multiple modalities for healing, and most of all, found the deep strength not to give up. "The message that flows through the entire book is *do not ever give up*. Ever. I want readers to understand how much power they really have to achieve their own recovery goals," says Cutts.

Cutts explains how "relationships replace eating disorders," which is why **BEATING ANA** focuses so heavily on the give and take of recovery -- what she calls mentoring -- through implementation of the "Mentor Model." This approach outlines uniquely practical and highly effective recovery tools and techniques that can complement any existing treatment program. Eating disorders thrive in isolation, secrecy and shame. To recover, we need to break through this wall, and we cannot do that alone. For lasting recovery to occur, we need each other. "Quite possibly, the only experience tougher on a human body, mind, heart, and spirit than falling ill is getting better. It gets unnecessarily tougher, however, when

we assume that we will have to heal the same way we got sick -- alone. We don't; in fact, I couldn't," explains Cutts. Mentoring neatly circumvents the isolation in which an eating disorder flourishes by putting us in direct connection with each other -- heart-to-heart, mind-to-mind, spirit-to-spirit. When beginning a recovery program, she stresses the importance of recognizing that we need to recover on all four levels of our being -- physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual -- and that there is a relational component to each.

Cutts explains that there are "4 Keys" to recovery success. The first Key is to find a "Key to Life," which is the most important key element of beginning the recovery process. This involves finding something worth fighting for and recovering for. For some it may be the ability to have a family someday. For others it may be a longing to help others who are suffering. For Cutts, it was being able to compose and perform music again -- a passion her eating disorder had prevented her from pursuing professionally. The second Key is to understand how to turn from becoming better at maintaining the eating disorder to becoming better at beating it -- harnessing the power of what Cutts calls "Misdirected Potential." The third Key is to learn to turn one's mind from an enemy into an ally and partner during the recovery process. The fourth Key is to begin to experience how relationships replace eating disorders, something that Cutts reiterates throughout the entire book through her ongoing explanation of mentoring and the art of building supportive relationships with self and others. In **BEATING ANA**, readers will have a "virtual mentoring experience" through the interactions Cutts has with her mentees. They will also learn how to locate mentors, and how to become their own mentor, best friend, and supportive champion during their recovery process.

BEATING ANA is an empowering book, filled with personal stories, practical tools, affirmations, encouragement, and inspiration. Many of the chapters offer techniques and exercises that can be done as a family, in a therapy setting, during inpatient or day program treatment, in between treatment sessions, and during the transitional and aftercare phases of recovery. **BEATING ANA** can be a whole-family experience, drawing in loved ones, caregivers, communities, and whole treatment teams to work together to help the reader recover. **BEATING ANA** can also help ease any understandable frustration and impatience the reader and their support team members may feel during the recovery process. Throughout, readers will learn to be their own agents for change in achieving their recovery goals, and as they get better they will also discover how the ripple effect is incalculably precious and powerful as they are then able to turn around and offer their support to others who seek recovery.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shannon Cutts is a sought-after speaker at colleges and conferences around the country and is also an award-winning songwriter. Cutts founded *Key to Life: unlocking the door to hope*, an organization that offers events, workshops, concerts, products, and services to foster awareness, education, intervention, and prevention of eating and related disorders. She is also the founder of *MentorCONNECT*, a community where mentors and mentees can connect to experience the power of mentoring. Visit www.key-to-life.com to learn more about Shannon and **BEATING ANA**, join *MentorCONNECT*, subscribe to Shannon's blog and monthly support e-newsletter, and find out how to plan or attend a *Key to Life* event.

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By Shannon Cutts
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Media Questions

BEATING ANA

How to Outsmart Your Eating Disorder and Take Your Life Back

By Shannon Cutts

1. What is your personal experience with having an eating disorder?

I developed anorexia at age eleven and bulimia at age nineteen. I was diagnosed when I was twenty-three. Little was known about eating disorders when I was ill, and I did not have access to insurance coverage for treatment. I had to develop my own “treatment program” to help myself get better. Today, I have been in strong recovery for over a decade and am privileged to mentor others who want to follow in my footsteps.

2. Why did you decide to write *BEATING ANA*?

BEATING ANA is the book I looked for and never found during the fifteen years I battled my eating disorder. In each chapter of the book, I have included many of the creative techniques I developed for myself that helped me to overcome my eating disorder. I believe so strongly in these techniques that, for the last several years, I have shared them with those I mentor as well. Now, through *BEATING ANA*, I have the chance to share these techniques with everyone who wants to achieve recovery!

3. What message do you want readers to take away from reading *BEATING ANA*?

It is so important to find something worth fighting for – something you want more than your eating disorder. I call this finding your “key to life”. I also truly believe that **Relationships Replace Eating Disorders**, which is why *BEATING ANA* focuses so heavily on engaging in the give and take of recovery – what I call mentoring.

4. How can reading *BEATING ANA* help readers recover from their eating disorder?

BEATING ANA offers twenty-eight chapters of ideas I have personally developed and tested out, first through my own recovery process and then through mentoring others. Since five of the women I have mentored volunteered to share their experiences with these techniques, readers can feel confident that, if they work hard and really give the techniques a try, they too can experience the triumph of breaking free from their eating disorder. Readers are also offered the chance to participate in our online mentoring forum, *MentorCONNECT*, where they can connect to develop ongoing mentoring partnerships.

5. How can reading *BEATING ANA* help parents, loved ones and professionals support those with eating disorders?

It is often very difficult for loved ones and even professionals in the field who have not had first-hand experience with overcoming an eating disorder to truly grasp what it takes to go through the daily, step-by-step process of recovery. In *BEATING ANA* I focus on a very practical how-to approach to help sufferers, loved ones and professionals understand what worked for me in *overcoming* my eating disorder. Each chapter offers techniques and exercises that can be done as a family, with a mentor, in a therapy setting, during inpatient or day program treatment, or in between treatment sessions.

6. What are the warning signs to look for if someone is concerned that they or someone they care about might have an eating disorder?

Noticeable, recent changes in behavior, habits, relationships, priorities, and/or moods, obsessive thoughts and hiding behavior around food (ex: obsession about weight and body size, squirreling away food, rushing to the bathroom immediately after meals, food disappearing from the kitchen overnight, pushing food around on the plate or refusing to eat meals). Weight changes – down OR up – may also signify the presence of an eating disorder.

7. What is the best way to talk to someone you suspect might have an eating disorder?

It is always best to talk to someone you care about when you are calm. If you feel angry or frustrated, or scared, wait until you feel calm before approaching them. Make NO ASSUMPTIONS. Even with the alarming statistics we have today, just because it looks like, walks like, talks like or even acts like an eating disorder doesn't mean that it is one. The goal is to *find out* what it is – together. The *Key to Life* website has much more information about how to help someone at www.key-to-life.com.

8. You are a speaker and performing songwriter as well – tell us about how that impacts your continuing recovery.

After I achieved sustained recovery from my eating disorder, I began giving music concerts again – in fact, the chance to write and perform music again was what I now call a “key to life” – a huge motivator for me to do the hard work of recovery, and it is one of the greatest joys in my life now that I am recovered! One night not long after I became stable in my recovery, I gave a concert, and afterwards a young woman asked me why my songs made her feel like I knew her – even though she had never heard of me before. She asked if I had had an eating disorder. When I told her that I had, she asked if I would go to her treatment center to encourage her friends who were still there. How could I say no? So then I began not only singing but also speaking to a wide variety of audiences. I found that, by sharing the strength, experience and hope I had received from my mentor with others through stories and songs, I strengthened in my own recovery as well.

9. How can someone with an eating disorder begin to recover?

The most important key element of beginning the recovery process is to find something worth fighting for and recovering for. Next, it is important to have a thorough medical evaluation to address any immediate health concerns. It is also crucial to begin to replace the eating disorder with real relationships – with your treatment team (medical doctor, psychiatrist, therapist, dietician, mentor) and also with your friends and family – and to work to replace the eating disordered coping skills with healthy skills. Finally, it is vital to remember that recovery takes time – patience and small steps forward can work miracles.

10. In *Beating Ana*, you reference “4 Keys” to recovery success. Can you share more about this?

The “4 Keys” are like the four pillars that form the foundation of any successful recovery program. The first Key is to find a “key to life”, which I explained a bit earlier. The second Key is to understand how to turn from becoming better at maintaining your eating disorder to become better at beating it – what I like to call mastering your “Misdirected Potential”. The third Key is to learn to turn your mind from your enemy into your ally. And the fourth Key is also something I mentioned earlier, which is that *real, human Relationships Replace Eating Disorders*.

11. In *BEATING ANA*, you share your correspondence with five of your longtime mentees. Tell us about your work mentoring others who are recovering from eating disorders – how did you begin doing this work, and why do you believe that mentoring is such an important element in a successful recovery process?

Well, mentoring was all I had in terms of recovery support when I decided I wanted to get better. When I first got sick back in 1981, our understanding of eating disorders, and mental health in general, was not what it is today. But there was one woman, who was actually my physical therapist at the time, who won my trust and got me to open up about my issues with food. My relationship with her began to replace my need for my eating disordered coping skills, and slowly I lost desire to hold onto my eating disorder. After I achieved sustained recovery, others asked me for help, and I saw how the process worked very similarly for them as well. That is how my own work as a mentor began, and I am still mentoring others today.

12. Can you explain more about what *MentorCONNECT* is and how it can help in the recovery process?

MentorCONNECT is a mentoring forum where *BEATING ANA* readers and others can connect to build ongoing mentoring partnerships. The *MentorCONNECT* site also offers community forums, a monthly ezine, my blog, articles from recovery experts, supportive music and much, much more! Readers can learn more at www.key-to-life.com.

13. Why did you think it was important to include elements from the Twelve Steps of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in a book about eating disorders recovery?

Well, I had always heard about A.A. and the Twelve Steps, but it wasn't until I began working with my second mentor, Lynn, that I realized how powerful they were. I maintain no affiliation with any of the Twelve Step-based programs, but I am grateful to Lynn and to the A.A. organization for the key principles outlined in Section One of *BEATING ANA* that have helped me to strengthen in my recovery program and reach my recovery goals. I wanted to share these key principles with readers so they could experience their power firsthand like I did.

14. Why do you use music as a part of your work with people who have eating disorders?

Music was a lifeline for me before and during my recovery process, and remains a key element of how I learn and grow, and how I can communicate what works for me with others who want to recover. To me, music is a truly universal language – someone who is hurting might not trust a person, but we don't have any reason to distrust a song or a melody! Music is also a great healer – we can take in deep messages and inspiration, and feel such intense hope, when we are listening to a song that seems to really capture what we are experiencing and what we long for. In fact, I recently partnered with fellow author Andrea Roe to release a CD compilation project of eating disorders recovery music written by survivors, for survivors. The CD/book set is called *You Are Not Alone, Vol II*. You can find out more on the *Key to Life* website at www.key-to-life.com.

15. So what is next in the works for you as an author, speaker and songwriter, and where can people go to find out more information about *BEATING ANA* and *MentorCONNECT*?

Well, I am currently excited to be working hard on my second book, which builds on the information from Section Four of *Beating Ana*. I am also developing study and support group materials from the text of *BEATING ANA*, and expanding the *MentorCONNECT* site offerings with my team. And I am beginning to write for my third full-length CD. The *Key to Life* website has updates about where I will be speaking, performing and offering book signings for *BEATING ANA* and *MentorCONNECT* at www.key-to-life.com.