

EATING DISORDERS  
**ARE NOT**  
**JUST**  
**A 'GIRL THING'**

Bev Mattocks



**“I help to raise awareness  
that boys get eating  
disorders**

**...& help parents to identify  
the warning signs so they  
can get urgent treatment  
for their son.”**



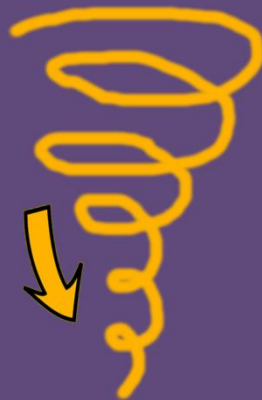


# MY SON, BEN, IS NOW 22

His eating disorder began  
in the spring of 2009  
when he was 15



**Less sport + diet foods = maintain  
physique + popularity**





“It’s not as if I sat down one day and decided to ‘get an eating disorder’”

anorexia is a "girl thing," surely?



# Summer 2009 - symptoms

- Intense exercise without pleasure
- Dieting / avoiding widening range of foods
- New interest in 'healthy eating'
- Obsession with nutritional labels
- Eliminating fats / carbs from diet
- Increased interest in cooking
- Ritualistic eating
- Belief that 'getting fat'
- Social withdrawal
- Losing weight



Sept 2009

is this NORMAL?

NO!



- Skinny boys aren't unusual
- Nor are fussy eaters
- Boys don't get periods
- No height / weight charts
- "Healthy" BMI

... and...





There's nothing  
wrong with me!!!

# Nothing wrong, huh?

- **Crushing depression**
- **Out of control behaviour**
- **Vicious mood swings**
- **Nightmare meals**
- **Any excuse to exercise**
- **Social isolation**
- **Losing weight**





I am fat!



**“Call the GP and get him  
to refer you to CAMHS.  
Tell the GP it’s urgent.”**





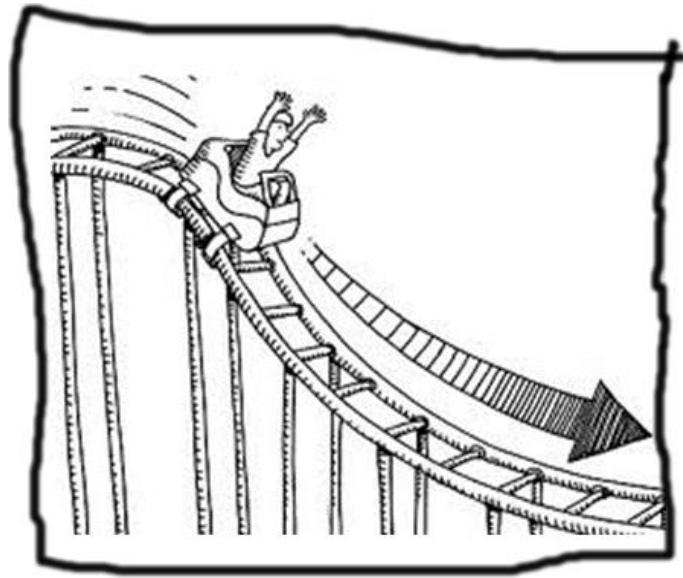
**PHEW...**

CAMHS will fix it

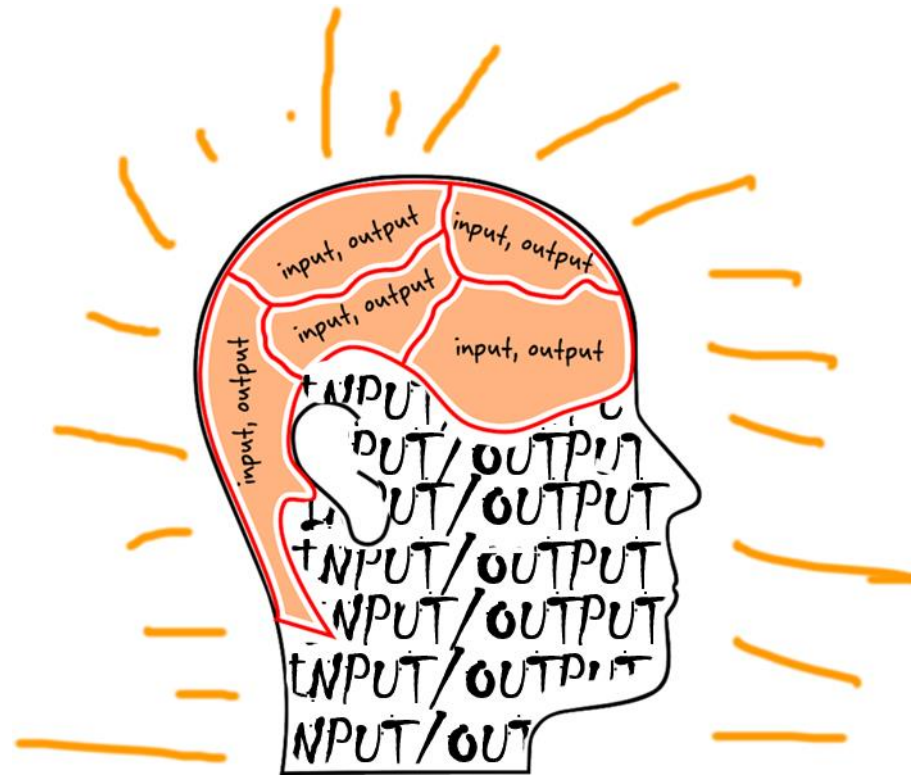
# A month before we heard back

... then a **18-22** week wait





**In 18-22 weeks' time, Ben could be dead!**



**It was all about 'input, output', 24/7**



“ Ben's heart is doing

**FUNNY THINGS**”

At last...

# CAMHS

A thick, hand-drawn yellow brushstroke underline that starts horizontally and then curves downwards and to the right, ending in a wavy tail.

February 2010

Spring 2010, finding  
it hard to cope under  
the strain





Mum = "Too anxious"

Ben as a  
rugby 'prop'



# No FBT

The "talking treatment"

He has to want  
to recover

He has to want  
to recover

He has to want  
to recover

He has to want  
to recover



**Individual sessions  
to try and fix what  
was going on inside  
his head.**

March 2010

Eureka!!

[www.FEAST-ed.org](http://www.FEAST-ed.org)

Families Empowered & Supporting  
Treatment of Eating Disorders



... and the **A.T.D.T.** forum  
(Around The Dinner Table)

113

## Eating Plan 6

### BREAKFAST

1 full cup of cereal with a cupful of milk

+

2 toast (wholemeal or white) with 2 tps butter/margarine and jam/marmalade if desired

+

Glass of fruit juice

### MID – MORNING

Snack from list

### SNACK MEAL

1½ sandwiches with 2 slices bread + 1½ tps butter/margarine + filling

+

Salad with substantial side e.g. handful of crisps or tbsp coleslaw or tbsp potato/pasta salad

+

Full bowl of milk pudding or sponge/pie/crumble with custard/ice cream/sauce

+

Glass of fruit juice

Butter?  
You've got to  
be kidding!

Pie? Crumble?

Custard?  
No way!



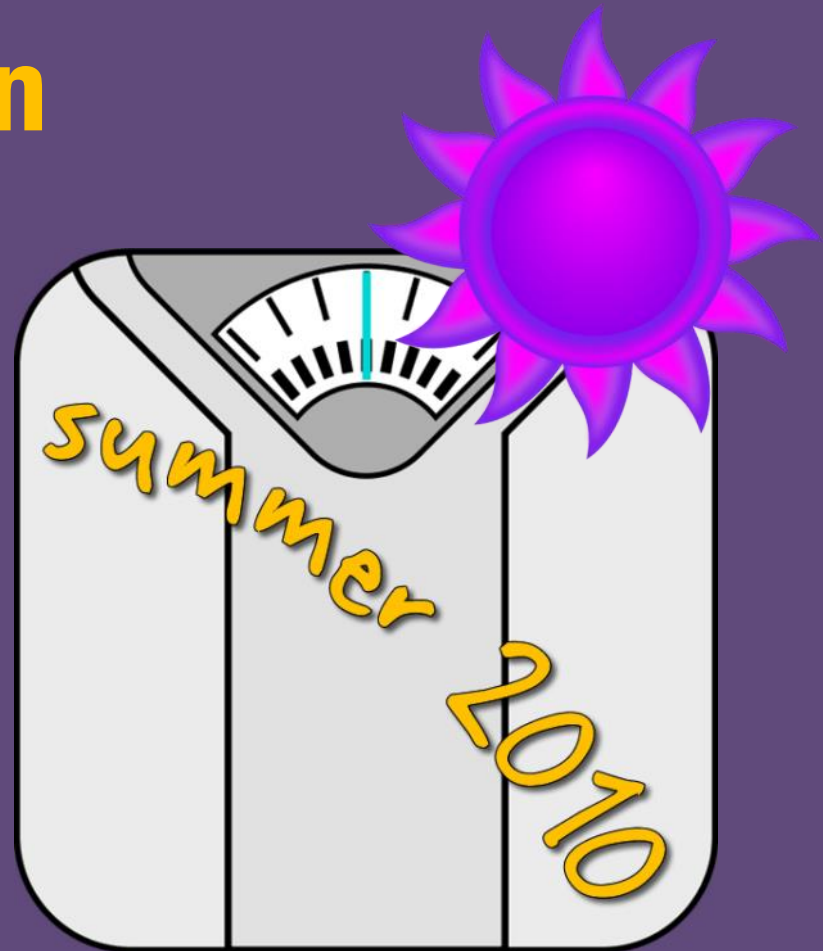
= **FAT**



Heartbreaking,  
nightmarish  
thoughts going on  
inside my head,  
summer 2010



- **Weight loss**
- **Mood deterioration**
- **Suicide threats**
- **Risky behaviour**

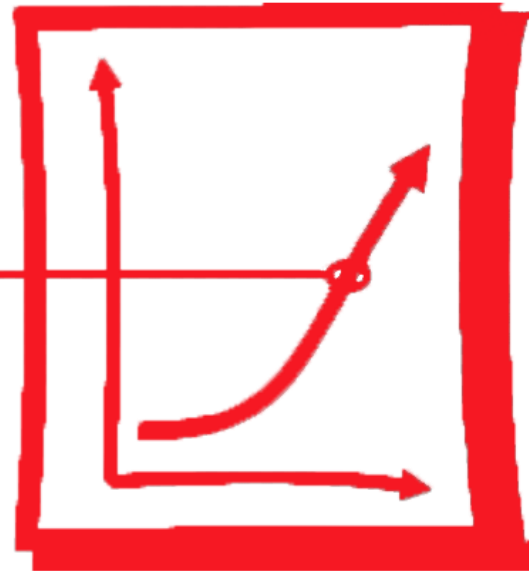




“ Ben's heart is doing  
**FUNNY THINGS**”

Oh no, not again!!

Oct 2010





MAY 2010



FEB 2011





Easter 2011

**CONTRACTS !!!**



what is

## CONTRACTING?

- A system of rewards / incentives
- Encourage progress / changes
- Overcome challenges

SEE: <http://eatingdisorders.ucsd.edu/patient/ift-pages/bc.shtml>

# OUR CONTRACT

important!



"Do Points"

- Weight gain
- Eating enough / more food
- Controlling exercise
- Facing fear foods
- Socialising
- Getting back into school

all about  
REWARDS



NOT a bribe  
or punishment

Find out more about our Contract on my blog:  
[anorexiaboyrecovery.blogspot.co.uk](http://anorexiaboyrecovery.blogspot.co.uk)

# Slowly but surely...



*March 2012*

**DISCHARGED**  
**from CAMHS**



???



Sept 2012

# UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE



- ✓ Meetings with Counselling Service, Student Health, Student Support Services, Accommodation, etc
- ✓ Accommodation Mentor ← Really great!
- ✓ Very supportive Faculty



...is there, if you ask for it

2014-2015



*patting disorder*



**HE MADE IT!!!**

What would have been more helpful?

- ✓ **Professionals to recognise eating disorder**
- ✓ **Fast diagnosis, urgent referral & treatment**
- ✓ **Focus on weight gain & balanced diet**
- ✓ **Assistance with eating at home**
- ✓ **Parental inclusion as part of treatment team**
- ✓ **Full weight restoration**
- ✓ **Discharge when fully recovered, & followed up**
- ✓ **Help with transition to university**





**The warning signs in boys can be  
slightly different from girls**



I was an  
exercise addict

My BMI  
was higher

I was a big  
rugby player  
before I got sick

They didn't think  
I was too bad

I don't get  
periods

I "looked  
OK"

I wanted a  
six-pack



~~BMI~~

less emphasis

BMI

Why wasn't weight restoration important?

Why was CAMHS happy "to settle for good enough" ?



**It's the BMI issue again!**



**WHAT  
HELPED  
MOST?**

F.E.A.S.T

Our  
Contract

School  
support



University  
support

**BUT THE #1 THING THAT GOT  
BEN WELL WAS...**



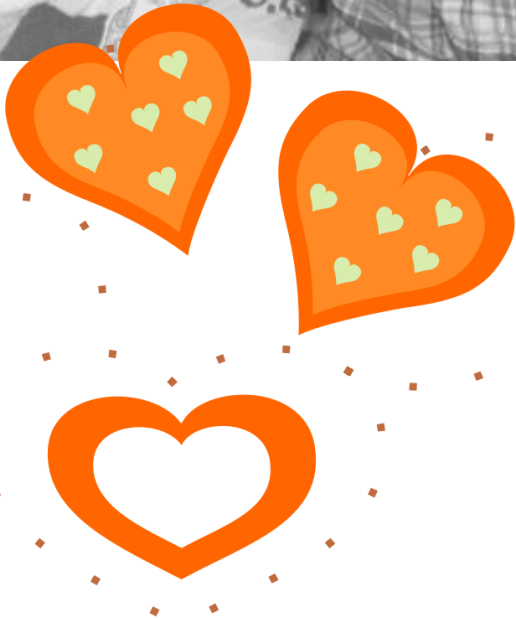
**Ben**



**HIMSELF**



Ben's Dad



**Never underestimate  
your instinct  
as a parent !!!**

From  
Jan 2011

I   
blogging

- ✓ **Identify the signs of eating disorders in boys**
- ✓ **Take urgent action**
- ✓ **Demand a speedy referral / treatment**
- ✓ **Demand evidence-based treatment**
- ✓ **Demand full weight restoration**

