

Once Upon a Time in a Land Not So Far Away

Kate Lindquist

Once upon a time in a land not so far away, lived a little girl. This little girl loved...she loved life...she loved exploring and being creative. She loved swimming in the pool and running thru the sprinklers. She loved watching cartoons and being silly. She loved learning and understanding. She loved being a sister and a daughter. This little girl saw all the beauty that existed in the world and in others through her very own big blue eyes...she didn't even need rose colored glasses to do so! She also though felt very deeply. She could feel the pain and hurt of others. She could feel the sorrow of the kid that was all alone and that of the one that struggled. She could feel when there was a great big elephant in the room or a thorn in one's side.

Well, this blonde haired, blue-eyed child who was quite shy, began to experience hardships of her own. Her parents divorced the year she started middle school and she was just beside herself. Embarrassed and afraid, she told no one. She went about her days with her little secret tucked deep in her heart. She was also teased daily...on the school bus because she had "hairy legs", at school because she ate "everything but the kitchen sink" and was lanky, in the art room because she "couldn't have drawn that"....she was teased for being herself...but she powered on, keeping a brave face, spreading kindness, and smiling because she realized the world had enough negativity and needed more love.

A few years passed and life seemed to be going pretty well. This little girl was turning into a young lady, entering the world of high school and learning more and more every day. But hardship struck again and this time to cope, she developed anorexia. Not many knew much about this potentially deadly coping mechanism back in these times...she actually didn't really even know what she was doing...she just knew it was helping her to deal. If you recall she felt A LOT. She loved A LOT. But the world didn't quite support a person like her too easily...and to try and "disappear" from the pain in her heart and chatter in her mind, she used food.

The young lady spent the rest of her high school days in turmoil. People in the town called her names, they threw rocks at her, and said harsh, insensitive comments. She was lost and confused. She couldn't make sense of what was happening. She started seeing a couple specialists in the town, was put on a medication (cuz that's what they did back then), and went to countless groups...all of which were supposed to help her fit into the land of normal again. Little did she know there was a long road ahead of her and normal was not where she would be heading.

Over the course of the next 10 years, this young lady continued to do what she did best...spread love and kindness and keep on her brave face. She finished high school, graduated college, and received her master's. She traveled to France, became friends with Hunter "Patch" Adams, started a homeschool art class, and even found her kitty cat soulmate. What you didn't see was that the anorexia was tearing her apart.

Narrators Note: We have come to find out that anorexia has a genetic component and that all the medication in the world, and the talk therapy, and the inpatient stays cannot fix it. They can help

manage a little bit of misaligned brain hardware but the only true healer is food. I'll leave resources below for more info....anywho back to our story.

So, from 18 to 35 our blue-eyed girl had a couple close calls and trips to the ER. She went into four eating disorder treatment facilities. Was put on and off countless medications. And spent countless hours, and money, in therapy sessions. You might ask, why didn't she get better? Why was she still struggling? Why didn't professional help, HELP? It did temporarily. She'd get to a place where the anorexia symptoms were manageable and under control (remember there is a genetic component so it doesn't leave for good), where she could function and have a job, and laugh, and love. But it was a quick fix. It was like putting a band-aid on a broken leg.

What no one had taught her, however, was to love herself...UNCONDITIONALLY. To love herself EVEN IF she had divorced parents. To love herself EVEN IF she had hairy legs. To love herself EVEN IF she ate everything but the kitchen sink and stayed lanky. To love herself EVEN IF she drew something people didn't think she could do. To love herself EVEN IF! She could love others that way but she didn't know how to love herself that way.

Well, wouldn't you know it, like all fairy tales, the writers were determined she learned how. Two years ago, while working in a great school doing what she loves, teaching art to the heARTS of little kids, she began experiencing weird physical symptoms. She was getting odd head pain and sensations, having a lot of waves of intense panic and fear, and the anorexia symptoms that were somewhat under her control started to ramp up too. This made no sense to her. She was on a medication that was supposed to keep her calm and feeling good! What could be happening?

After countless medical tests, having to resign from her job, and not a lot of answers, she happened upon a gifted nurse. Turns out her body was in tolerance withdrawal...meaning she was taking a medication but her body wanted more, so it was starting to act like it was going through withdrawal. "What are the options" she asked. "Well" said the gifted nurse "we can up the medication or we wean you off completely."

I'll be honest the medication was doing didley squat for the young lady. As we have come to find out medication does not "cure" anorexia. "It can't get much worse" she said "so I guess let's wean me off of it." And that's what they did. The funny thing is, it got MUCH WORSE!

For the next six months of weaning and the following year after, this fragile soul experienced, hmmm how shall we put this, hell on earth. I guess this would be the "scary" part of the story or where someone tackles a dragon or something. You see, Benzodiazepines affect the GABA receptors in our body. Those little babies pretty much are responsible for everything the central nervous system does. So with the medication now out of the young lady's system her body had to learn how to work all on its own.

You know how we learn to ride a bike? Trial and error a bit. Lean too far to the left and you fall. Too far to the right, oops, fall again. And this happens until we finally get the hang of it and our brain and body understand exactly how much of this and that is needed to stay up. GABA receptors do the same thing...so the young lady experienced weeks of bone splitting headaches, burning sensations and numbness in her extremities, hot flashes and cold ones, digestive distress so bad it felt like acid had

been poured down her esophagus, night terrors, brain zaps, loss of vision, life reviews, tinnitus...I could go on but we would be here for pages and pages.

You know what our young lady did...she weathered the storm holed up in her studio apartment, kept a brave face, and was brought face to face with the lesson she needed to learn...what is UNCONDITIONAL SELF LOVE. She couldn't leave her body. She couldn't leave her mind. She couldn't leave the fact that she was nearing the end of her 30's, had never been married, didn't have kids, now had no job, and was enduring the most heinous and painful experience. She was stuck there. And the hours passed. And the days ticked by. And the months added up. And this is when she learned a lot about acceptance. She began to see this is her story...it's not good or bad. It just is. The young lady was experiencing an understanding of herself and her life journey in a way she never dreamed possible.

Well folks, that brings us to May of 2020, the clouds have started to part as her body has gotten better at riding this new bike without medication, and the blue-eyed woman is sharing her love through heART. She still experiences days where symptoms flare and her body falls offline. Her hair is falling out in handfuls from the trauma of the withdrawal and her lips and feet go numb when she does live webinars. She can't do anything too strenuous or a wave takes her down and yes, she has daily cry sessions because sometimes it's just too much to handle.

But she keeps spreading love. She keeps lifting people up to show them how amazing they are. She sprinkles magic where ever she can and whenever she can. She knows what she has been through and is determined to make others, especially our youth, know they are loved, that they matter, and that they are seen for their gifts not their flaws. Friends, this is also a story of hope. A reminder to never give up. There's been times I know this young woman wanted to throw in the towel, thought there is no way she could go on, but you know what, she can and she is. And YOU CAN TOO.

Before I bid you all adieu, I want to thank you for joining me. If you ever need an ear to listen, a person to contact, or just a heartfelt hello, please reach out. We are NOT our stories but they DO carry wisdom and knowledge that may help just one other individual in some way or bring awareness and enlightenment about a taboo topic.

Oh, and what about the cat you ask? He and Miss Kate are living happily for the time being. He's making cameo appearances, gifting her with lizards, and the best purrball a girl could ever ask for. Happy heARTing

Anorexia Gene Studies and resources

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2828778/>

<https://www.sciencealert.com/new-genetic-links-reveal-anorexia-could-be-much-more-than-a-psychiatric-condition>

<https://www2.psy.uq.edu.au/~uqbziets/Guisinger2003%20Adapted%20to%20flee%20famine%20.pdf>

<https://youtu.be/MqB91afKeRY>

About the Author: Kate holds a M.Ed and B.S in health science. She currently teaches K-8 art and is the founder and owner of PeaceLoveArt™

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