



# A message from Alex

*Every day my sense of awe at being alive, and well, and happy, grows. It has taken time to fully realise the consequences of my illness on myself and other people, but with that awareness firmly in place, I choose to keep facing forward.*

"Today, I am in recovery from anorexia and bulimia. There were many long dark days – and years – when the people who know me the best could not even dare to believe that for me, recovery might be possible. Not because I was determined to die, or because of the damage I had done, and not because they had given up on me – but because they had tried their level best to offer me all the help they could, to no avail.

My anorexia came to the surface in my late teens and it raged on for years. I had been brought up in a safe and loving family home and I knew I wanted a long and meaningful life. However, what I also knew was that I didn't like the feelings inside of me – feelings of being inferior and inadequate, of fear and discomfort. My life felt out of control, my feelings frightened me and my mood sank to an all time low.

Control around food quickly became my coping mechanism – my escapism, my self-punishment, my way of life. It was a self-perpetuating situation, the more weight I lost the more weight I wanted to lose, the more I starved myself of food, the more I became obsessed with it. I was a walking, talking disease. I see now that I was driven by fear, driven to hurt myself in such a way that I risked losing everything I had. Starving myself quickly became the main focus of my life, and day-by-day the cravings to lose weight grew even stronger. For years I was convinced that eventually there would come a day when it took me to some magical goal. But the goalposts kept on moving, whatever weight I lost it was never enough, however many times I promised to "never do it again", I did.

Each time I was admitted to treatment, I was quite literally pushed into it by the people around me. And each time I fought those people and the treatment regime I was subjected to. Refeeding programmes that primarily focussed on weight gain never worked, no sooner had I gained the weight and been discharged, I would simply lose it again. The words of concerned family and friends fell on deaf ears, and it is only now that I can see that once I made that choice to check out of the real world, nothing and nobody would reach me again until I chose to return. Or would they?

The people around me never gave up, they kept on going, they kept challenging my thinking, my words and my actions until slowly – very slowly – I started to wake up to reality. When I was admitted to a treatment centre my desire to do things my way remained as rigid as ever, it was more due to the fact that the people around me were on their knees and pleading with me that I entered

into treatment. Then, slowly, miracles started to happen. My path into recovery was not an easy one, and a lot of heartache was felt along the way. But this is not unusual or surprising; as for years a powerful disease of body, mind and spirit, had gripped me.

Anorexia had taken root in my heart and in my head. To disentangle myself from my disease was not easy, it took time and a lot of support to separate the two. Now, looking back, I am not sure that my final surrender and admission of defeat was voluntary or whether I was so tightly backed in to a corner that I was left with no alternative. Today that does not matter. What is important is the outcome. What is important is that I have a life today. I have a good relationship with my family and friends, I have a job and I have my own home. Recovery has brought me hope, enthusiasm and independence. I feel peace of mind, and a sense of self-worth.

I recognise the choices that I have in how I respond to my feelings – and by living according to my value system and having the willingness to nurture myself and to ask for help when I need it, I choose to no longer live in an isolated world of self destruction. There is too much to lose – there is everything to lose – my health, my happiness, my present and my future. Today I feel excitement at being alive, and I see new opportunities emerging daily as my emotional, spiritual and physical beings strengthen and repair. The void is filling – with love, with laughter, with life itself.

I would never have thought it possible, but I have been given a chance to live free from the pain, I have been offered a solution. Today I live in the solution, not in the problem. Today, much of my working life is spent travelling far and wide, speaking to audiences of schools pupils as well as to teachers and parents. I tell my story and I offer insight and ideas and support, and I strive to guide others away from living (or rather, not living) in the dark shadow of an eating disorder. My straight talking has become a resource that can open the door for other people like me. And it does. It's fair to say that I was given a second chance at life, and I intend to make the most of it."

*Following the success of her talks in schools, Alex Corkran set up a company, Springback, which employs speakers who have first-hand experience in a variety of issues. Through sharing experience, insight and inspiration the speakers all offer presentations that provide valuable information to young people.*

For further information go to:  
<http://www.springback.org.uk>