**I Choose Recovery, I Choose Freedom, I Choose Life**

AUTHOR

**Larissa Potma**

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***Trigger Warning for discussions of self-harm and suicide***

**Dear ED,**

**You say to strive for perfection, and  being as small as possible is the ideal.**

**You say I do not deserve the space that I hold, I do not deserve that meal.**

**You say I should follow standards that determine who I am as a person based on what I look like above all else.**

**Your voice begins to control my every move while I remain as silent as a mouse.**

**You promised me eternal happiness if I just followed that stupid diet.**

**And now the truth is finally being found.**

**You say I'm forever unworthy and unlovable without you by my side.**

**I listened to everything you said, and everything went wrong.**

**So much pain and suffering when deep down all I ever wanted was to truly belong.**

**Dear ED,**

**No matter how hard I try, I will never be enough for you.**

**They say everyday is a new day so, today, I'm taking back my life**

**I no longer listen to your lies.**

***I Choose Freedom,***

***I Choose Recovery,***

***I Choose Life.***

**My ED has taken everything away from me: friends, memories, my personality, my ability to work or attend school, and my ability to live my life. But this battle has taught me so much and helped me find strength that continues to make me who I am today.**

**I grew up as a very happy, creative, and curious child. I loved hanging out with friends and family, doing arts and crafts, listening to music and singing, attending school, and swimming. By age nine, I began to develop disordered eating habits that worsened as I moved into my high school years. Around the same age I dreamed I was going to change the world. I didn't know how but I knew I was going to make a difference and help people. As the years went on, I became a competitive swimmer, volunteered within my community, took on leadership roles  at school, was a swim coach - I was always very involved and busy. However, I found myself often struggling to fit in. I was insecure about my appearance and what I did or said all the time. “Is there something wrong with me?,” I asked myself. Due to stigma, I thought that so many had it way worse than myself so I never reached out.**

***The severity of your struggles do not make you any less or more deserving of help.* I broke and could no longer hold the smile I hid behind. I began to use negative coping strategies, including self-harm. I fell into a dark hole and tried ending my life multiple times. I was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. After many different medications, I finally found one that worked. I've spent a lot of time at war with myself and still, everyday is a battle. I'm currently waiting to go back to treatment for my eating disorder because I am dedicated to recovering from my ED. Today, I can proudly say I am one year self-harm free. After a long time of thinking I'd never make it, I walked across the stage and graduated in the summer of 2021.**

**These illnesses took so much from me, but I never lost my fight. Through the midst of it all I continued to volunteer and work endlessly to make a difference in my school and community. I've grown miraculously and I'm proud to call myself a mental health advocate. I work tirelessly to make a change through all my social media platforms.**

**Although my story is nowhere near complete, I have been fortunate enough to have caught a glimpse of what it's like on the other side and it is so worth it. My mental illnesses don't define me and they never will. I am so much more than a diagnosis.**

**I am a daughter,**

**A sister,**

**A friend,**

**A leader,**

**A volunteer,**

**And an advocate.**

***I am human,***

***I'm not perfect,***

***I have flaws,***

***but who I am is forever whole,***

***who I am is forever enough.***

**I now know no matter what happens,**

***I Choose Life.***

**Dear reader,**

***The hardest battles are given to only the strongest of soldiers,* and you, my friend, are a warrior. *Mental illness is nothing to hide or be ashamed of, and please know that you're not alone.*No matter who you are or what you're going through, *keep going*. There are moments in life where you will feel defeated, like the world is completely against you and that you'll never make it through. Trust me when I tell you *there's so much hope and light.***

**Life is short,**

**Tomorrow needs you,**

**So, choose to stay.**

***Choose Life.***

*Author's Bio*

My name is Larissa Potma, and I am an 18-year-old Mental Health advocate from the small
town of Mission, BC, Canada. When I'm not busy trying to change the world. You can find me,
playing with my dog, facetiming my friends, getting Starbucks, or jamming out to Keith Urban on
repeat. You can find me on all my [social media platforms](https://linktr.ee/larissaroo3). I share my story with you hoping that at least one of you out there feels inspired enough to stay another day. Always remember you are not alone!