

# Hope, Help & Healing for Eating Disorders

A Whole-Person Approach to Treatment  
of Anorexia, Bulimia, and Disordered Eating

Gregory L. Jantz, PhD  
with Ann McMurray

Revised and expanded with the latest information  
on body image, food addiction, brain science, nutrition, and more.

Praise for  
*Hope, Help, and Healing for Eating Disorders*

“I highly recommend *Hope, Help, and Healing for Eating Disorders* to anyone who feels they will never escape the trap of eating disorders. Practical, hopeful, sensitive, and wise, this book offers unique insights for body, mind, and soul.”

—DR. GARY SMALLEY, author of numerous books  
including *The Amazing Connection Between Food  
and Love*

“This must be the most helpful book on eating disorders there is.”

—LONDON SMITH, MD, author of numerous books  
including *Feed Your Body Right*

“No guilt here, no hype, only a grace-filled glimpse, a true reflection of what could be you. Trust this man because he cares with enough passion and honesty to get to where it really hurts and to help you (or someone you love) to find creative healing.”

—GRAHAM KERR, television host of *Graham Kerr's  
Gathering Place*

“I was deeply touched and encouraged that [Jantz]...believes people living (or nearly dying) with eating disorders can overcome and be free.”

—CYNTHIA ROWLAND, author of *The Monster  
Within*

“A practical plan for healing the wounds and growing into a rewarding life beyond eating disorders.”

—ROBERT A. ANDERSON, MD, author of *Clinician's  
Guide to Holistic Medicine*

“Thanks, Gregg, for not only providing hope for those who are hurting but offering a way to turn their experiences into help for others.”

—DR. LYNDA HUNTER-BJORKLUND, author  
and speaker

“Whether you are personally battling an eating disorder (as I did) or you care for someone who is, Dr. Jantz’s book will provide highly informative and helpful steps to finding your way back to emotional, spiritual, and physical wellness.”

—KATHY TROCCOLI, singer, author, and speaker

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This book is intended to be a resource and help on the subject of eating disorders and to point the reader to the source materials that contain a more thorough treatment of the subject. None of the information presented in this book is meant to be a prescription for any kind of treatment, medical or otherwise, and reference to other organizations and materials is for convenience only and is not intended as an endorsement. The author has made every effort to present the current research accurately and assumes no responsibility for inaccuracies, omissions, or errors contained in the source materials. The author and publisher are not liable for misuse of information provided. The author and publisher are neither liable nor responsible to any person or entity for any loss, damage, or injury caused or alleged to be caused by the information in this book.

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*This book is dedicated to Sandra, Cynthia, Jean, and Kirsten—  
for their steadfast example of always fighting for hope.*



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## Preface to the Revised Edition

Over the years, I've never ceased to be amazed at the power of the written word and even more importantly at the power of *hope*. This is the third edition of *Hope, Help, and Healing for Eating Disorders*. It continues to speak truth and hope into the hearts of those struggling with an eating disorder. In addition, now it also speaks into the hearts of those who are imprisoned by their relationship with food and obsessed with food, weight, and body image, whether formally diagnosed with an eating disorder or not.

In the word *hope* is freedom. Your life doesn't need to be defined every day by what you eat or don't eat. You do not need to define who you are by how you look. Your definition of self-worth does not need to be tied to the number on a bathroom scale. By reading this newest edition, you join the thousands of others over the years who made a decision to seek out hope, help, and healing for themselves. With this book, may today be your day of hope.

# Acknowledgments

Every day I am privileged to work with an amazing team of people. Yes, they are professionals and gifted in their various fields, but they are first and foremost *people*, who approach those who come to us with that special human touch and perspective. I could not do this important work without the help and leadership of *Laura Minor, MSW, MHP, CDP*, who so ably serves as executive director for The Center.

I would like to especially acknowledge the invaluable input from our Medical Team at The Center: *Kabran Chapek, ND; Scott Buesing, ND; Julie Caruso, RD, CD; and Katy Figel, RD, CD*. Their professionalism, optimism, dedication, and compassion are daily examples to us all.

To the entire Center Team, I wish to say *thank you*. Thank you for sharing in the vision of *hope, help, and healing* with those we are blessed to work with. Thank you for understanding that each person is not a disease or a disorder or a diagnosis but is a precious gift from God.

Truly, this life is an adventure, a journey we are blessed to take together. Thank you for believing in and living out our mission to *help people change their lives for good*.

# Introduction

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD,  
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give  
you hope and a future.”*

—JEREMIAH 29:11

How do you measure hope? Who do you look to for help? What does healing feel like? These are elusive questions. This book is written to provide you with answers. Finding them will not be easy, though. There will be times when you'll feel like flinging this book far away from you—only to reach for it again. To find the answers you seek, you must have courage. You must have patience. You must have perseverance.

But, most of all, you must have *hope*. Even if it is covered up by anger, guilt, shame, and despair. Even if it seems like the smallest of flames, barely flickering in your heart. Even so, it is enough. Hope is unbelievably powerful, and its power is perhaps most evident when it is the feeble flicker that refuses to be extinguished. This book is meant to shelter your hope against the gale forces of an eating disorder or disordered eating. It is meant to fan the flame of hope inside you.

You are about to embark on a journey of discovery and a journey toward hope, help, and healing. Along the way, you will also discover a great deal about yourself, your family, and your faith. What you learn will enlighten and challenge you. It will illuminate dark corners and bring hidden things to light. It will provide moments of comprehension. Sometimes it will be painful.

When the pain comes, don't stop. No matter what type of eating disorder you have, facing pain with wise guidance yields strength. You are not on this journey alone. Many others have taken this journey before you. They have struggled to complete it and reach their destination of wholeness and recovery. Listen to the words of one of your fellow travelers:

You have given me the first glimmer of hope in many years. Your wise words are echoing in my heart, and I feel like finally someone understands and can help guide me through this to the other side. I feel strong, like a real person again. I can do this.

So can you. Have faith in yourself. Have faith in this book. Have faith in a God who holds your future in his hands. Perhaps you have picked up this book because you are nearly out of hope for your future. You're asking, "How can my life be different? I don't want to be this way!" If your supply of hope seems almost gone, remember, God has an inexhaustible supply, and it is his desire to give it to you.

## **THE WHOLE-PERSON APPROACH**

Through my many years as an eating disorder specialist, whether an eating disorder or disordered eating, I have wholeheartedly believed in a whole-person approach to treatment. This approach incorporates all the different aspects of your being: emotional, intellectual, physical, relational, and spiritual.

The whole-person approach is not a quick fix. It is a long-term, life-changing strategy for recovery and healing. It recognizes our complex nature as people and strives for health and balance in all aspects of our lives.

Perhaps you've been through counseling or treatment programs in

the past that have proved ineffective. I urge you to try one more time, using the whole-person approach. I have seen the effect hope, help, and healing has had on thousands of people. Because I've seen it work for others, I know it can work for you.

No one thing can guarantee success for you. But when you address all the relevant factors contributing to your eating disorder or patterns of disordered eating, your chances for a full, long-term recovery are greatly enhanced. None of this can happen, however, unless you decide to start your journey. You must want to change more than you fear staying the way you are.

### **Your Emotional Self**

The emotional aspect of your being refers to the natural feelings you have about yourself and others, the way you react to circumstances and situations. Feelings aren't always easily discernable—they can run very deep. The emotional self rides the currents of those feelings. It exalts and it grieves. It hopes and it despairs. It fluctuates with the tide of your emotional highs and lows.

Your emotional self is affected by your eating disorder or disordered eating. It is influenced by core issues from your past that you may not even be aware of. These core issues hold the keys to your self-destructive behaviors. You do what you do for a reason. You feel the way you do for a reason. The reasons can be obscured by the very behaviors they produce. They are the fuel that feeds your present behavior and dominates your emotional self.

### **Your Intellectual Self**

While your emotional self may demand more of your attention, each of us also has an intellectual self. It is the part of you that desires to grow and change, the part that revels in mental stimulation and learning new skills. The emotional self may feel the thrill of discovery, but it is the intellectual self that incorporates the discovery into who you are. The

intellectual self can hold on to truth, even if the emotional self doesn't feel like it.

During the process of healing from an eating disorder or disordered eating, the intellectual self must undergo a housecleaning of old ideas, assumptions, and expectations. Some “truths” will need to be jettisoned, some truths will need to be refurbished, and some truths wait to be discovered. The whole-person goal is for the emotional and the intellectual selves to complement and support each other in healing and recovery.

### **Your Physical Self**

The physical relates to your body, to its physiological functions and systems. Many things can affect your physical self, from the medications you take to the food you eat. The whole-person approach will help you to take an in-depth look at your own body and how it is working. You will look at how certain specific physical conditions can affect and contribute to your eating disorder or disordered eating.

We will also look at how your body can function in the future. Nutritional advances offer hope to support physical healing and return your body to optimum functioning. Each of us has the ability to appropriately nurture our own body, providing health and vitality.

### **Your Relational Self**

The relational aspect refers to your relationships with people in your past and present. Your relational self interacts with others and affects how you feel and what you know. It is in constant flux, affected by those you interact with daily, including yourself.

Your eating disorder or disordered eating may have dysfunctional relationships as a core issue. This book will help you look into all your relationships. The whole-person approach works to reestablish proper connections with others, mend past associations, and build healthy new relationships, including those involving appropriate sexual intimacy.

## **Your Spiritual Self**

The final aspect is your spiritual nature. Your spiritual nature is where hope resides. It is the part of you that may be, as yet, unexplored. Don't let that stop you. Your spiritual self is a source of great strength and purpose. It has been my experience that those who recover from an eating disorder usually say that it was the spiritual that kept them focused during recovery and gave them peace and hope. The whole-person approach urges you to acknowledge your spiritual self.

Your spiritual side can be a casualty in the struggle with eating disorders and disordered eating. It can be devastated by the effects of shame and guilt over past events and your present relationship with food. Recovery is possible when you reevaluate and reestablish your spiritual relationship with God. Even if you have not had a relationship with God in the past, he has one with you and sincerely desires for you to draw close to him. By doing so, you can come into contact with an incredible source of comfort and strength during your journey through this book.

## **WHAT THIS BOOK IS**

Each chapter in this book will discuss one issue and how it relates to eating disorders or disordered eating. At the end of each chapter, there is a section called "Food for Thought." This section provides words of truth and encouragement. You can write down answers in the book, but you might want to keep a separate journal as well. That way you will have more room to write or draw, and you can keep the journal as private as you want. "Food for Thought" supplies tools of empowerment and gives you an opportunity to record your thoughts and feelings. Questions and related activities will assist you in integrating the material you have just read. (Often, what you read will produce an emotional, intellectual, and/or physical response. Be sure to record these responses, even if you don't understand where they are coming from.)



Writing something down on paper has a finality about it. Some of you may hesitate at the thought of putting down on paper what you have experienced or are feeling. I urge you to set aside any reticence you may have and actively embrace the “Food for Thought” activities and journaling. This method of disclosure will be positive for you emotionally, intellectually, and even physically.

You will also find four letters interspersed throughout this book. These are real letters from people who have suffered from eating disorders. These individuals want to encourage and strengthen you—healing *is* possible!

Finally, at the back of this book you’ll find a question-and-answer section about eating disorders as well as a resource list of other books that you may want to look at, including some books that are mentioned in this one.

## **WHO SHOULD USE THIS BOOK**

Perhaps you’ve noticed I’m using the terms *eating disorder* and *disordered eating*. Eating disorders are generally thought of as anorexia—the restriction of food and fluids; bulimia—the binge-purge cycle of overeating; and compulsive overeating—the binge cycle without the purging. All of these eating disorders have the power to completely overtake a person’s life and mind. I’ve certainly known this to be true over the years.

I’ve also known people who don’t fit the classic definition of an eating disorder, but whose lives, nonetheless, are consumed by thoughts of food, what to eat, when to eat, how to eat, how to undo what they’ve eaten, when to eat next, or how to hold off eating. They may not starve themselves or binge and purge, but they are still trapped within a prison of food.

If food is no longer about nourishment, if it has become something else altogether in your mind, this book is for you. It doesn’t matter that

you've never been formally diagnosed with an eating disorder, but if you know in your heart that your eating is disordered, that it's just not right, this book is for you. If food is no longer just food to you, if it's a love-hate relationship, a friend-or-foe reality, this book is for you.

There is a right relationship each of us was meant by God to have toward food. If your relationship with food has become warped and is overshadowing other relationships in your life, how you feel about yourself and others, this book is for you.

It's not about a diagnosis in your life; it's about a determination in your heart to move forward, to find hope, help, and healing for yourself. You are more than a diagnosis; you are more than a disorder. You are an amazing individual, loved and accepted by God. If you doubt that, this book is for you.

This book may be more than just for you. If you know or suspect a friend or loved one is suffering from an eating disorder or struggling with a pattern of disordered eating, this book could be the most precious gift you can give. If you are a family member or loved one, reading this book yourself—and gaining an understanding of the one you love—may be the most precious gift you ever give yourself.

I strongly recommend you use this book in conjunction with other people whenever possible. It is designed to be used in partnership with other caring individuals—a personal friend or professional therapist, counselor, or physician. Eating disorders and disordered eating are often pursued in isolation as a way to distance yourself from other people. By choosing to open yourself up to another person, one who is able to partner with you, you are taking an important first step to recovery.

## **WHEN YOU SHOULD USE THIS BOOK**

You should use this book when:

- You can no longer live the way you've been living.
- You are tired of suffering in silence.

- You decide hope must win out over despair.
- You decide you are willing to open yourself up to learn the truth.
- You acknowledge that the choices you've been making in your life aren't making your life any better and are making your life worse.
- Someone who really cares about you begs you to.
- You are ready to heal and desire joy.

## HOW YOU SHOULD USE THIS BOOK

As you read this book, try to personalize it whenever possible. Put what you can into an “I” or “me” context. This book is written for *you*.

The “Food for Thought” sections often involve writing. For some, this will come as naturally as breathing; for others, expressing yourself on paper may be more difficult. To make your job easier, forget about grammar and spelling. Construction is not important; content is. Allow your thoughts to flow unhindered by concerns about punctuation or penmanship. There are no grades here, no extra credit or neatness points. The only reward will come from an honest and open heart willing to accept the risk of exposure.

There may be times when the words just don't come. Sometimes the scariest moment is the one before the first word is written. Don't allow this to stop you. Close your eyes and think about a piece of music or a song that conveys what you are feeling. If something you've heard or read comes to mind, write it down. Whatever you put down will be *yours*, whether you thought of it first or not.

If English is not your first language, write in whatever language you feel most comfortable with. Use both. Sometimes a word in one language conveys much more meaning than it does in another. In other words, use whatever tools you need to express yourself as accurately as possible.

If the writing just doesn't come, try drawing a picture. If you are writing and a picture comes to mind, draw it. If you are writing prose and a poem comes to mind, write it down. Don't restrict your response. Let your thoughts flow in the direction they desire.

You can decide who will see what and how much you have written. I believe that sharing who you are through this book with a caring friend or professional can be of immense value to you personally—and of tremendous encouragement to you on your journey. Doctors, counselors, psychologists, and self-help groups have all used the material in this book to aid those suffering from eating disorders and disordered eating. This is a book that can be of great value on its own, but it is especially powerful when used in conjunction with others.

## **WHAT YOU'LL NEED FOR THIS BOOK**

To get the most from this book, you will need:

- A true desire to see the journey through.
- A quiet place and time to work.
- Something to write with. Try using a pen: You won't be tempted to erase what you've written. Whatever you write will have value. Let it stand.
- A journal or notebook to write and draw in.
- A set of crayons, colored markers, colored pencils, or all three.
- A readable, modern translation of the Bible.
- A variety of outdated magazines you can cut pictures out of.

For those of you who are taking this journey of healing, please realize you are not alone. Along with your fellow travelers, there is One who walks with you. If you have a belief in God, this book will be a faith-building experience. God is here to walk with you, to lighten your load. Trust him to be there for you, just when you need him. He has walked his own long path, with the scars to prove it. Trust him, trust yourself, and trust your faith in him.

## WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT

This book is not a magic text, designed to evaporate your struggles overnight. It is not a “cure” but a time-tested resource. There will be times when you love this book and times when it will be difficult to turn one more page. Struggle if you must, cry when you can, but keep turning the pages. Keep reading. Keep working. Keep believing. Keep hoping.

It is not a book with “right” and “wrong” answers. This isn’t some sort of test you have to pass. There is no prize for filling up the pages. If you read over what you’ve written, and the page is full but your heart is empty, go back and do it again. The purpose of this book is to get you beyond the need for your eating disorder or your disordered eating and to help you discover your truth. Sometimes truth takes awhile to find. Be patient. Each person’s journey will be different, depending on individual circumstances. Some of the questions or activities in the book may not seem to apply to you; they may not even appeal to you. Please complete them anyway. You may come to understand or discover something unexpected.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

To begin, examine your reactions to what you’ve just read and write them down.

1. If I could describe how I feel right now, I would say...
2. I also feel...
3. What I’d really like to do now is...
4. I’d really like to do that because...
5. What am I expecting from this book?
6. What am I expecting from myself?
7. The thing I’m afraid of most right now is...
8. Draw a picture of what you’re feeling right now. It could be anything from a gallant knight on a mighty steed to a small

child standing at the edge of a high cliff. Make sure you are represented in the picture.

9. Think back to a time in your life when you felt the same way. When was it? Why did you feel that way?
10. Now, pretend the picture you have drawn is a movie. What happens next?
11. If you could change the outcome of what happened to you before when you felt this way, what would you change?
12. What would you like the ending to be this time?

For a long time, you may have been doing all you could to avoid thinking and feeling many of these things. Be prepared for and understand that you will be reluctant to start delving into these sensitive areas. You can't change anything until you can talk about it. Being able to talk about an experience or a feeling will be easier once you have been able to write it down.

Be on guard for feelings of panic. Reading this introduction may even have triggered your eating disorder behavior or produced an emotional response you feel compelled to deal with through food. This is natural and should be expected. Panic will peak; strive to work through it. You are starting a journey, and that means leaving one place and moving toward another. This requires change, and change can be unsettling. Your eating disorder or your pattern with food, on the other hand, is predictable, a known quantity. Your fear of change may suddenly make your eating disorder or your disordered eating look more attractive or less destructive. Don't be deceived.

While you are focusing on the uncomfortable nature of change, you need to look again at the dead-end reality of what you're doing. Yes, change and movement are scary and challenging, but you wouldn't have picked up this book and gotten this far if you didn't know—really know—that the way you are living is no longer acceptable to you.

The next chapter will help you understand the nature of your eating disorder or disordered eating and fully appreciate the inherent dangers in

your behavior. Make the commitment right now to continue reading, in spite of any hesitancy you may be experiencing. The uncertainty you are feeling is natural. It is not a reason to stop.

It's your life we're talking about. Let's begin the healing journey together.