

Hidden Battles

同志社国際中学校 3年 吉田有花

When you are 6, cake is just cake. You pick the most colorful cake with mounds of whipped cream. You never once thought about carbs or the amount of calories it contains. All you were worried about was picking the biggest and sweetest one.

But as you grow up you start noticing. Noticing how your mom barely eats at dinner, her plate left untouched. You start to look in the mirror, and everything looks wrong. The pouch on your stomach, the flabs of fat hanging on your arms. You start checking the back of snack packages to see if you can afford to indulge in it. Suddenly, you don't feel hungry. You start with something healthy. A small workout. Cut carbs here and there. It's not enough. You scroll on your phone every post a model with the tiniest figure, smiling as if mocking you. That's when cake starts to feel like numbers on a platter. That's when food becomes your enemy.

This is the experience of 262 million teenagers worldwide. Eating disorders have one of the highest mortality rates out of any mental illness, but somehow people still refuse to understand. "Just eat. It's no big deal". They say. But they don't see me looking in the mirror picking at my flaws dissecting every feature, bump, blemish. They don't see me paranoid scanning the dinner table and calculating calories in my head. They don't see that I am genuinely scared to eat.

I had a conversation with my friend the other day. The subject was significant experiences every girl goes through at least once in their life. At first it was the talk about "the traumatic break up" or "falling in love with Justin Bieber" but my friend brought up something interesting.

"I feel like everyone made themselves throw up at least once," she said. It shook me. An experience every girl goes through once in their life and purging was brought up. Casually too, as if it is normal to have an eating disorder. Eating disorders shouldn't be a universal experience.

Looking back, I think the root of my problem wasn't the fact that I genuinely didn't like how I looked. The societal standards reconstructed my understanding of what I thought was pretty. Not pretty enough. They said. The bar was set so high they corrupted my mind into thinking pretty was only pretty when you are skinny. Scrolling on my phone, I realize that being skinny is so normalized, glorified to the point where it's all people talk about. The latest diet. Easiest way to make yourself throw up. Tutorials on how to starve yourself without anyone noticing. Nothing tastes as good as skinny feels.

With information like this flooding social media, it's no wonder teenagers starve themselves to the death. There are 100 thousand videos on weight loss aimed for teenagers on tiktok alone. The topic is the most searched across all mainstream social media. We are children. We can't realize what we are doing is wrong, not with everyone on the internet telling us otherwise. They praise us for starving ourselves, so why would we stop? They praise us, reward us until everything gets out of hand, and all people see is lack of self-control. "It's probably just a phase." They say. But they don't realize that we just don't see like them anymore. They don't realize that we see our darkest nightmare when all they can see is cake.

出典

【Webページ】

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders

「Eating Disorder Statistics」

〈<https://anad.org/eating-disorder-statistic/#children>〉

(最終アクセス2025年12月4日)

National Library of Medicine

「Purging Disorder: Recent Advances and Future Challenges」

〈<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6768735/#:~:text=Purging%20disorder%20affects%20approximately%202.5,risk%20for%20developing%20purging%20disorder.>〉

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