

Lauren, 35

Peer support worker & mother-to-three supporting InsideOut's eClinic after 14-year battle with anorexia nervosa, **ADELAIDE**

Lauren, 35, Adelaide, is a mental health peer support worker and mother-to-three. One of her earliest memories, at just four years of age, was feeling self-conscious about her tummy in a swimsuit.

Lauren's struggle with restrictive eating began during late childhood when she noticed her older sister, four years her senior, was smaller than her. She responded by limiting her food intake in order to lose weight.



At 12 years of age, she was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa by her GP. Involving psychiatric and physical symptoms,^{1,2} this serious and complex illness is marked by extreme food restriction, and significant, and often dangerous, weight loss.³ Lauren was immediately referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for support.

Despite being initially hesitant, Lauren was encouraged by her dad to join a day program at an eating disorder service, which marked the start of her recovery.

Given Lauren's first-hand experience with anorexia nervosa, she welcomes the launch of the InsideOut Institute's eClinic – Australia's first free, fully online, national treatment hub for eating disorders. It offers flexible, self-paced programs, including BEeT for binge eating and bulimia nervosa, Skilled for a wider range of eating disorders, SupportED for carers, and a Healthcare Professionals (HCP) Hub. By removing traditional barriers to care, the eClinic ensures people like Lauren can access vital support when they need it most, regardless of their postcode, socio-economic status, or cultural background.¹

Today, Lauren has decided to share her story to raise community awareness and understanding of living with an eating disorder, and to urge those who are currently afflicted to seek help and support.

This is Lauren's story.

Lauren began feeling insecure about her body at four years of age.

"I was self-conscious about my tummy showing and felt an overwhelming urge to cover up. The embarrassment never really went away," said Lauren.

Over time, Lauren started to compare herself with her sister.

"She tried on my netball skirt, and it was too big for her. I couldn't understand how my older sister was smaller than me.

"I started restricting my food, adopting an obsessive diet that cut out everything except meat. I had no carbs or bread," Lauren said.

"I found myself stepping on the scales multiple times a day, I was obsessed with my weight."

Growing concerned for her welfare, Lauren's father took her to the GP, who diagnosed her with anorexia nervosa.

"I was terrified people would think I had an eating disorder, and try to stop me from losing weight.

"Anorexia nervosa took over every part of my life. It felt like no one truly knew me, or recognised what I was going through," said Lauren.

Over the ensuing 14 years, Lauren continued to wrestle with her eating disorder.

"I wasn't managing it – I was just maintaining a certain weight to keep others happy, but nothing was changing in my mind."

During her first pregnancy, Lauren lost weight due to an illness unrelated to anorexia but after giving birth, the experience triggered a renewed desire to lose weight, intensifying her struggle with anorexia nervosa.

"I hated my body, but kept pushing through because my baby was my priority. As soon as he was born, all I could think about was losing weight," Lauren said.

It wasn't until the new mum turned 26 years of age, that she sought professional help, and commenced her recovery.

"My dad stepped in again and told me I needed help. If he hadn't, I honestly don't think I would be here today," said Lauren.

"My child gave me a reason to fight, and to get help."

Lauren has important advice for all Australians living with an eating disorder.

"Get help as soon as possible. Don't let embarrassment stop you.

"The sooner you act, the better your chance of recovery. Should a GP dismiss you, be sure to advocate for yourself," said Lauren.

"Also ensure you utilise every accessible support, including the InsideOut eClinic, to aid in your recovery journey."

To learn more about the InsideOut Institute's eClinic, head to eclinic.insideoutinstitute.org.au or email admin@insideoutinstitute.org.au.

Australian patient support services offering 24/7 helpline services include:

- **Butterfly National Helpline: 1800 334 673**
- **Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636**
- **LifeLine: 13 11 14**
- **Men's Line Australia: 1300 78 99 78**
- **Kid's Help Line: 1800 55 1800**

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To coordinate an interview with Lauren, please contact:

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References

1. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Fifth ed 2013.
2. Eating Disorders Victoria. Classifying Eating Disorders 2024 [Available from: <https://eatingdisorders.org.au/eating-disorders/what-is-an-eating-disorder/classifying-eating-disorders/>].
3. Walsh BT, Hagan KE, Lockwood C. A systematic review comparing atypical anorexia nervosa and anorexia nervosa. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2023;56(4):798-820.