Kate, 27
Entrepreneur, anorexia nervosa survivor & ANGI participant, Sydney

Entrepreneur, online business owner and health and lifestyle blogger, Kate, 27, fought the potentially life-threatening illness, anorexia nervosa, for more than 10 years.

During school and university, Kate excelled academically, despite battling the physical and mental demons of anorexia nervosa.

After being hospitalised on numerous occasions and nearly losing her life more than once, Kate chose to embark on a journey of self-discovery in early 2014 and is now living free from the illness.

Equipped with renewed confidence and a fresh outlook on life, Kate recently launched the online legal business, http://www.thelazylaw.com/ and a health and lifestyle website.

Here, she shares her story to provide a ray of hope to those battling anorexia nervosa.

After graduating from high school with exceptionally high marks, Kate was accepted into a Bachelor of Law at The University of Sydney. After a five year double degree, graduating with Honours, Kate began to climb the corporate ladder, and spent the next four years working long hours in a highly stressful environment at a law firm and then a multi-national in Sydney.

“Anorexia nervosa followed me like a dark shadow during my final years of high school, right throughout my entire Law degree, and into the first couple of years in the corporate world.

“There wasn’t a single moment where I could escape it. It was insidious, pervading every aspect of my life,” said Kate.

“A number of factors contributed to me developing anorexia nervosa. I was a ballet dancer but also dealt with a father who left without looking back, and abuse as a child.

“Due to certain experiences in my life, being loved and accepted was directly related to how I looked, and so this overwhelming desire to fit in started an extreme diet which quickly spiraled into anorexia nervosa,” Kate said.

Initially, Kate began obsessing about her weight and started using laxatives excessively. This behaviour then escalated into bouts of starvation and eventuated in fully blown anorexia nervosa. Within a year of diagnosis, Kate was admitted to the emergency ward four times.

Her family, friends and then boyfriend watched helplessly as her weight dropped to dangerously low levels, plunging her into a deep, dark, impenetrable place.

“I nearly lost my life on more than one occasion, and even those close encounters weren’t enough to jolt me out of the illness.

“At one stage, my kidneys failed and I went into cardiac arrest. But all I cared about was making it to my next lecture,” recalled Kate.
“Without private health insurance, I was unable to access much needed professional help on a regular basis. It was left to my incredible Mum and family GP to essentially keep me alive.

“My mother, younger brother and then boyfriend suffered more than anyone should have to. My mum spent years in a constant state of worry and anxiety, waiting for the moment I would collapse and not get back up,” Kate said.

“My relationship with my brother also quickly disintegrated to the extent that he didn’t want to know me, and would ignore me in public.

“And my boyfriend at the time mustered super-human strength to love and stand by me when I was incapable of being the other half in a relationship. For the eight-and-a-half years we were together, his patience and understanding allowed us to have something magical in the midst of an otherwise incredibly difficult time,” said Kate.

In 2013, Kate was rushed to hospital for emergency surgery for a condition unrelated to her anorexia nervosa. After yet another close shave with death that saw her almost lose her life on the operating table, Kate spent seven days in ICU, and during this period, came to the realisation that life was precious and she had to make change.

“I don’t think anyone could have lifted me out of the clutches of my illness. It was only then that I realised I had to do it all on my own,” Kate said.

In early 2014, within the space of a week, Kate quit her corporate job, ended her eight-and-a-half-year-long relationship with her boyfriend, moved house and headed overseas on her own.

“I felt free. I travelled to the Philippines and explored different worlds. It took me out of my comfort zone and, in turn, saved my life.

“For me, anorexia nervosa was not just about my appearance, but a deep fear and issue of control and acceptance,” said Kate.

“Eating disorders in all their guises are insidious and destructive.

“For those stuck in the prison of anorexia nervosa or other eating disorders, it’s important to know there are many roads to recovery,” Kate said.

“I do think there is a genetic link to anorexia nervosa which predisposes people to the illness. If the Anorexia Nervosa Genetics Initiative (ANGI) study can help identify genes that predispose women and men to this life-threatening illness, I want to give it my all.

“If you could nail anorexia nervosa on the head and start therapy earlier to prevent its development, that would be great,” said Kate.

“I urge every Australian woman and man who has lived with, or is continuing to live with anorexia nervosa, to join the ANGI community and participate in this groundbreaking research to identify genes that play a role in the development of this life-threatening illness.

“Since my recovery from anorexia nervosa, I haven’t looked back,” Kate said.

“I’m excited about what the future holds for me and I want to help other women and men living with anorexia nervosa. You only get one life, so you really have to live it.”

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For more information, or to coordinate an interview with Kate, please contact Kirsten Bruce, Mark Henderson or Claire Wright from VIVA! Communications on 0401 717 566 / 0431 465 004 / 0467 415 617.