



The "F" Word

February is **Black History Month** as well as a month to focus on **body love!**

#NotMyPlace

By: Kyra Rickett

Growing up, I was lucky to have lived in an incredibly diverse city, a father who was open minded, schools with 50+ languages and exposure to less than favorable surroundings. Combinations of these factors have shaped me into the person that I am today: someone who isn't blind to oppression, prejudice and hate. But though I feel comfortable talking about these issues and securing my place as an ally, do I really have much of a place to talk on, for example, issues of race? In my eyes, no. The sole reason is because I am simply not a person of color (POC). Being aware and knowledgeable about these issues, however, allows me to teach others about such topics and give others different points of view though I have never, and will never, live the life that POC did and currently do. I can't say I've been racially profiled or been a victim of a hate crime due to my skin color. Any discrimination that I've experienced as a person has been the fault of my character or another part of my identity, not my skin's appearance or a resulting assumption.

So, as part of Black History Month, I am not only asserting myself as an ally, but I'm allowing those who have lived through the pain speak up and educate us all.

Here is a poem by Langston Hughes titled "I, Too" to further solidify the need for equality.

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed –

I, too, am America.

♥ BODY LOVE ♥

With February having National Eating Disorder Awareness Week, us here at WGS thought it was appropriate to send some love to those battling self-image perceptions. I had the pleasure of speaking to someone who has herself battled with an eating disorder. She recounts her journey, which includes recovery.

1. When did you first realize you had an E.D?

The first real sign for me was when I started to get secretive and defensive about my eating habits. I was in high school and had a lot of friends, but would go to the library alone to “work on homework” during lunch instead of to the cafeteria. The truth was that I didn’t want anyone to notice that I was skipping meals, so I essentially hid from my friends in the library. I remember getting so upset when a few of my friends started to join me there that I would go to the bathroom for the entire lunch block and blame it on cramps just to get away from them.

2. What changed about you, physically and mentally during this time?

Nothing about it was pretty or desirable. My skin was so dry it would flake off like dandruff when someone touched me, I had bags under my eyes, and I constantly had a headache and muscle aches. I had no energy, I blacked out almost every time I stood up. I went to the doctors for blood tests half a dozen times, always managing to avoid telling them what the real issue was and instead getting prescribed vitamin supplements, which I would take in lieu of actually eating nutritious food. I was losing weight, but I didn’t feel as happy or confident as I thought I would. Instead, I was defensive, incredibly depressed, unbelievably unstable, and irritable all the time. I constantly pushed people away and lashed out at loved ones. I was obsessed with food, it consumed my life. I thought about it from the second I woke up until I fell asleep. I planned out my meals weeks in advance; I looked up recipes online for food I didn’t allow myself to eat. If I had to deviate and change what food I ate, I would have a meltdown and be upset for days. If I read a book or watched a movie, I would be so focused on any food that the characters were eating that I couldn’t remember the plot after it ended. I didn’t enjoy anything anymore, I had never been so miserable.

3. When did you realize that you needed help? Was it a personal reflection, or external cues?

If it had been up to me, I likely never would have recovered. It’s very hard to push past your disorder and see yourself as a sick person, especially because an eating disorder usually spurs feelings of inadequacy and it’s very common for a person with disordered eating to tell themselves that they don’t deserve the help for a variety of reasons. Thankfully, my mom noticed all the behaviors I was trying to hide and started taking me to an outpatient facility specializing in eating disorders two times a week.

4. What was the process of recovery like?

Long and frustrating, but so worth it. For me, it was easier to restore my weight and recover physically than it was to recover mentally. I had a meal-plan to follow and weekly weigh-ins to stay on track, but outside of the clinic, it was just me and my disorder constantly fighting. It took me years to quiet that voice in my head, but I still have slip-ups now.

5. What advice do you have for men and women who are struggling with an E.D?

You are worthy of help no matter how much you weigh. You will *never* find happiness or satisfaction within your disorder. All an eating disorder does is take; it takes your personality, it takes your independence, it takes your social life, it takes your mental health, and it often takes your life. Recovery gave me the freedom, self-confidence, and happiness that I really desired. Right now is the easiest it will ever be for you stop and pull yourself out of this. It’s okay to be scared and it’s okay to have setbacks. Ask for help, somewhere, somehow.



Random Acts of Kindness

By: Sarah Elizabeth Dean

It takes almost no effort to be kind to others! In fact, being nice and participating in random acts of kindness can brighten someone's day in ways that you might not even be able to imagine. Below are some suggestions for ways to be kind that take almost no effort at all:

1. Give someone a compliment! It takes seconds, and it could put a smile on someone's face when they might be troubled or stressed.
2. Say "thank you" to someone who made a difference in your life. The power of gratitude is undeniable!
3. Listen, rather than interrupt. Sometimes all people need is someone to listen to them when they have a problem. Give them your attention and try not to overwhelm them with possible solutions and/or advice. Validation of their struggles is often what most people are seeking.
4. Be kind to yourself! It's difficult to avoid critical thoughts about yourself, but try thinking, "If I wouldn't say this to someone else, why would I say it to myself?"
5. Donate your unwanted things. Take any clothes or shoes you don't wear anymore and bring them to a local homeless shelter, for example.
6. Pay for a stranger's coffee! Oftentimes in drive through situations, kind souls will pay for the order in the car behind them too!
7. Call someone you love just to tell them you care about them.
8. Bring snacks for your coworkers or classmates! It could brighten up an otherwise regular day.
9. Make an uplifting or inspirational playlist on Spotify for someone who might be going through a rough time!
10. Try to make every person in a group conversation feels included! Sometimes being ignored can make someone upset, so fair acknowledgement is really important.

Upcoming Events

February 20th through 24th - Sex Week!
Check out UMaine's Student Alliance for Sexual Health on Facebook for more information on upcoming events!

February 15th - Feminist Film Series
VDAY: Until the Violence Stops. Come watch a film with us in Fernald 101 at 6pm!

February 22nd - Feminist Extravaganza

Contact Us

On Campus:

101 Fernald Hall
Orono, ME 04469
Phone: 207.581.1228
Email: WGS@umit.maine.edu

Facebook:

facebook.com/UMaineWGS

Twitter:

twitter.com/UMaineWGSS



STAY TUNED FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE!

Contributors: Kyra Rickett and Sarah Elizabeth Dean