

Book review



Bite Back: A compassionate guide to navigating eating disorders

Author: Genevieve Mora

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Audience: Self-help



Genevieve Mora spent most of her adolescence battling mental illness in the form of severe OCD and anorexia. In her introduction, she writes, "If you had asked me when I was 10 years old what my plans were for the next few years, I can guarantee 'fighting an eating disorder' would not have made the list."

She is now living a full life, free from the grips of this potentially life-threatening illness. Genevieve co-founded Voices of Hope (with Jazz Thornton), a charity organisation inspiring others in recovery. The creation of Voices of Hope is detailed in the book's Introduction. Gen is also the co-creator of 'Love your Kite' (an eating disorder resource app) and a passionate mental health advocate who, through her lived experience, works to empower and inspire others in their recovery journey.

Bite Back: A Compassionate Guide to Navigating Eating Disorders is divided into 3 parts. In the first part, Genevieve shares her own recovery story. She details her fall into anxiety at 10, then OCD and severe anorexia, leading to a hospital admission in 2010 at the age of 14. Gen shares intimate and honest accounts of her struggles through her many admissions to hospital wards and treatment clinics. At the same time, she speaks about the support and love of her family, the challenges they faced supporting her, and the people she met over this time who made significant imprints on her.

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The second part of the book aims to answer common questions about eating disorders, challenging the myths and offering tools in the form of exercises to complete for the sufferer and carer. Gen does a masterful job of weaving in her 'real life' perspectives and answers with her own and family's experience. The style seems to draw the reader in and does increase the understanding of what it 'is really like', leaving one with a greater understanding and increased compassion for those struggling with this illness.

The third section has a collection of stories from others with lived experiences of recovery from various eating disorders (not only anorexia). They share what they learnt and end with messages they would tell their younger selves. The common theme is that it is worth fighting for recovery, which is not always felt when in the midst of the illness. They provide validation and hope that life can be better again.

Genevieve writes with warmth, thoughtfulness and respect to those who helped her and to those who might read her words. It is intimate yet grounded. I recommend this as a resource to families, carers, siblings, friends, and anyone wanting to understand this complex illness. The book describes well the important part that family plays in the recovery of their loved one.

The book will also speak to those suffering; Gen describes her experiences and perspectives, which will be highly relatable, but she tries to maintain respect for differences.

Genevieve has and continues to contribute significantly to the mental health field. Thank you for sharing your incredible story of determination with such heart and compassion. The title captures the description of the book perfectly.

Review by Kellie Lavender, Registered Psychotherapist, NZEDC

Disclaimer: Please note these reviews are not intended as endorsements or recommendations from the Mental Health Foundation. This feature introduces resources that may be useful for individuals with an interest in mental health and wellbeing topics.

