

We Are Different!

Who am I, and do I have a real purpose on this earth? I believe these are two questions that people spend most of their lives trying to answer and never really find a personal answer to these questions. I am 25 years old and I believe I have found my personal answers to both of these questions. I guess I should start by first introducing myself. My name is Patrick Bergstrom and I am recovering from a four-year battle with a horrifying eating disorder. One more thing – did I mention that I was a male? I guess I just assumed you would have recognized that by my first name.

My name is Patrick, and yes I am a men's former college lacrosse player but that's not who I am. It is also true that I am a male who has suffered the horrible fate of facing a disorder that, in our society today, is considered a problem only females face. This must mean I am weak, shallow, and selfish. I am weak in that I have an eating disorder, and perceived as shallow because only selfish people have eating disorders. People only have eating disorders to starve themselves; they are superficial and want to be thin to fit in, to be thought attractive! This is far from the truth, but it is the picture that has been instilled in our minds since we first became aware of the world outside of our loving families.

I have been out of a formal recovery program for about a month and I still feel like friends misunderstand me. I truly believe that everyone who has or is struggling with an eating disorder is falsely judged and ignorantly labeled as an outcast. This should bother me (and at one point in my life it might have), but it doesn't. Why? Because I know who I am and that my life has true purpose and meaning. Perhaps I should ask everyone else this question...who are you, and what is your purpose in life?

For the greater part of my life I was known for my athletic and academic accomplishments. I hold many lacrosse records, weight lifting records in my high school, and have had excellent academic success. I was one of only a few lacrosse players to be Academic All Conference my junior and senior year of college. I am also the all-time leading scorer for my high school where I still have the record of more than 270 points. This record may never be broken, but to me, that doesn't matter. I don't want to be remembered for the records I hold or the amount of money I make, or the fame I achieve. Numbers mean nothing to me. What do I care about? I care about you!

I want to be remembered as the one person who suffered from an eating disorder and made the decision to not only change his own life, but also to give back to others. I am not weak nor am I shallow, neither is anyone else who has struggled with an eating disorder. We are sensitive people who care about the world, and care about people. I've had many friends, girlfriends, and even a fiancé. However, it wasn't until being in recovery for my eating disorder that I discovered the true meaning of love and friendship. I went into treatment misunderstood by my friends and abandoned by my fiancé. I was

ready to give up on life, yet I found my purpose and true self in those amazing souls who were suffering just like I was. Like me, they were doubted by many and lost to the world.

I am back in the real world now and I am still struggling to fit in. I recently participated in a business meeting where I was trying to explain to the person why I was interested in creating a web site. The site is called ichosetolive.com and my objective is to help the world better understand people with eating disorders. I will be launching my site to educate, inspire, and help save lives. Society thinks we are shallow and selfish. The truth is, we suffer from caring too much. Is it so wrong for somebody to actually care for other people before they think of themselves? It was recently pointed out to me by my friend JM (whom I met in recovery) that my greatest strength and supreme weakness is my heart. I suffered from an eating disorder, but more than anything, I suffer from loving too much. I really do care!! People with eating disorders struggle in daily life because they try to take on everyone else's burdens and put the love of others before the love of self. Yes, we struggle with food, but more than anything, we struggle because God made us special.

I can now look back on my life with no regrets. I am proud to say that my name is Patrick Bergstrom and I am recovering from an eating disorder. Try walking in my shoes or anyone's shoes who has been through the misery of an eating disorder. I challenge you to take 15 minutes out of your day and talk to someone recovering from an eating disorder. I bet in that short time, your life will be forever changed for the better. I am recovering from a terrible disorder and illness, but more than anything, I am struggling to fit in because my heart is too big. So who am I? I am just like you in many ways, but there is one major difference. I care about you and want to help you save your life. Maybe everybody should briefly suffer from an eating disorder. Then, just maybe then, the world that we now live in today might be a better place.

Perhaps I'm just a hopeful romantic, and my dreams are too great for you to understand. If I left the world today, would you remember my name tomorrow? I wonder what people would say about me? How will I be remembered? I am a male proudly admitting to having suffered from an eating disorder. Somehow I doubt that's what people are going to say when I'm gone. I'm certainly not going to be known for my athletic prowess or my academic GPA, those are ephemeral accomplishments. I'm going to be remembered because I had an unselfish and caring heart. I now know who I am and what my true purpose is. I wake up everyday trying to help you. Maybe I should be asking everyone – who are you and what is your real purpose?

My name is Patrick Bergstrom and I chose to Live, I choose to make a difference.

By

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