

tastelife

TASTELIFE AT 10

Ten years of changing the story
of eating disorder recovery.

TASTELIFE AT 10



CONTENTS:

Community Course	03
Leaders	08
Youth Track	12
Working in Partnership	16
Finance and the Future	18

WELCOME!

Welcome to 'tastelife at 10'! It is rare that I get an opportunity to pause and really take in what tastelife has become over the last decade. Jean Hart and I started as two women desperately seeking support for our daughters battling with eating disorders, but also for ourselves as we coped with the devastating effects on our families. tastelife has grown from these small beginnings to helping hundreds of people directly affected, resourcing health professionals, schools workers and churches across the country; and even beyond!

I am so proud of the people that are part of the tastelife story: past, present and future. I hope that you are proud to be one of these people, as you read stories of recovery here, of leaders who walk selflessly beside those affected and of our increasingly prominent vision to tackle eating disorders head on amongst young people. May you be inspired by how together, we have been changing the story of eating disorder recovery; and inspired to continue journeying with us as we look ahead to the future.

With love and gratitude for your support,

DI ARCHER
CEO TASTELIFE UK



COMMUNITY COURSE

'I AM WHOLE AND LIVE WITH A NEW SENSE OF IDENTITY AND PURPOSE'

Attending a course is a brave step for anyone experiencing an eating disorder or caring for someone who is. But it is life-changing.





JO'S STORY

Jo's journey of overcoming an eating disorder eventually led her to train as a leader and become a trustee of tastelife.

At five years old, I was diagnosed with a medical condition that caused significant renal damage and the need for long term care. Grownups all around me placed enormous importance on my weight – weight going up was bad and weight going down was good. So from a very early age, I began to connect my weight with my self-worth. I learned to bottle up my feelings and find ways to cope with them on my own.

It was a ticking time bomb and in my forties, I developed an eating disorder. Several difficult life events hit me all at once, and I was spiralling into darkness, feeling out of control and unable to cope. As a perfectionist too, this was unbearable and so I turned to controlling food and my weight. It seemed logical at the time – surely this would solve everything. But this changed from being helpful to distressing, as well as damaging for me and those around me who looked on with overwhelming concern.

It was thanks to one kind, understanding and compassionate friend that my journey of recovery could begin. She wanted to help me through the crisis. In addition, tastelife was starting up locally which I am personally convinced was God's timing. With another willing friend, I took the brave step of attending the



course, albeit in a very fragile, broken and depressed state. I was truly terrified, my stomach in knots and my heart pounding. At the start I just wanted to shrink as far into the chair as I could; but members were non-judgemental and our group represented a wide age-range and varying difficulties with food. As I listened and observed, I began to understand what had happened to me. I learned how to take very tiny – but hugely significant – baby steps forward towards recovery. I learned new ways of thinking and tools that would help me begin to tackle issues head on, little by little. The course was also the catalyst for going to my GP and receiving help there too.

Ten years on, I continue to feel like a new person on my ongoing journey of being well. I am whole and live with a new sense of identity and purpose. In September 2015, I completed the tastelife leader training. I became confident enough to use my story to show that recovery is possible. I am now part of the local team delivering courses and then in 2017, I became a trustee. I am so grateful to tastelife for being true to their vision during the last ten years; just look at how their impact has multiplied and how many people are being helped today.



“

'As a man, there is a big stigma around men and eating disorders. I know how much I would have benefitted from hearing from a man who had come through an eating disorder, making my experience more relatable. It's really important for people not to be scared of talking about mental health because the only way forward is to share.'

—

Ben, Course Leader

“



'Caring for a daughter with an eating disorder is a scary task. On the course, I was able to talk with other mums in the same situation. My husband and I realised we were not alone, and felt reassured that we won't always get it right.'

—

Sarah, mother and carer

“



'As a father, hearing stories from others experiencing an eating disorder gave me more understanding of what my daughter is going through and how she is affected. I can't get my head around all of it, but the concept of baby steps was very helpful.'

—

Graham, father and carer

HELP AND HOPE

through our 9-session, accredited community course online or in person.

2021

2022



25
courses



240
participants



37
were relatives
or friends of sufferers



7
were male



29
courses



252
participants



35
were relatives
or friends of sufferers



25
were male

1 IN 4

of those experiencing an eating disorder are men.*

86%

improvement in the recovery journey reported by course participants (since 2019).

* Prevalence of eating disorders in males, Sweeting et al, 2015



TRAINING LEADERS

'LIFE IS NOT EASY, BUT WE CAN OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES'

Meet two tastelife leaders whose contribution changes lives and transforms their own in the process.



KATE'S STORY

In rural Northern Ireland, there is nothing like the tastelife course. It is amazing to see how it is meeting a huge need; people get so much out of it, not to mention the incredibly strong friendships that result from sharing experiences together. I recently trained as a leader and am now equipped and excited to be leading our next course!

I had previously been a helper on the course, and after training, I feel completely ready to support people on their journey to full recovery from eating disorders. I have seen how the course moves people from despair to a place of hope, greater knowledge and a community that gives and receives support.

I have also been able to share my own experiences of an eating disorder, and have found so much joy in giving belief to others that full recovery is possible. During Eating Disorders Awareness Week in February, myself and another leader had the opportunity to visit a local secondary school and deliver an assembly to 150 pupils in Year 7. We then returned after Easter to deliver tastelife's Youth Track material! It is amazing to be in a position to give these teenagers the understanding and tools to prevent any food-related issues that they may encounter now or in the future. Prevention is better than cure, they say, and it is the truth! I can't wait to be part of changing more lives in my community.



HILARY'S STORY

I had just attended a seminar at a conference led by tastelife leaders. I turned to my friend at the end of it and said: 'I could do that!' Once retired, I threw myself into leading courses regularly from 2018; three in-person courses with follow ups, and the rest by Zoom. With genuine fear and trepidation, I embarked on this technological journey, teaming up with others who had much more know-how than I did. The support from 'head office' was tremendous. I like to indulge in positive self talk to maintain a self-belief that 'I can do it.' Well, I have done it!

Sometimes, I have been tempted to think that I am a bit of a fraud because I have not had a personal experience of eating disorders. However, I know deep down that this has in no way prevented me from facilitating courses with all-important sensitivity. Having a close family member with mental illness has given me insight from various perspectives. I have learnt so much from exceptional people, both course participants and leaders, it really is a joy!

I understand the courage it takes to sign up for the course, let alone to see it through. Course participants can form a mini cheerleading team to help with this. For me, tastelife provides the 'we are all in life together' ethos; life is not easy, but we can overcome the challenges.

TEN YEARS OF ADVANCING EATING DISORDER RECOVERY

90%



of our courses and resources are now available online as well as in person.

228



men and women have been trained to become course leaders in the last 10 years.

9,500+

people have been reached with education about eating disorders, through conferences, seminars and workshops.



1830+

people have participated on the community course.



YOUTH
TRACK

YOUTH TRACK

'WE ALL NEED TO EAT. SO LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!'

Education and early intervention is the heart behind tastelife's preventative tool for young people.

“Lara* was barely engaging with medical services; it was a big concern. However, she engaged like never before with Youth Track in discussing her worries, thoughts and feelings around food.

She opened up to the possibility of looking at food differently and then, over time, the healing could begin with the medical professionals who were trying to treat her.’

—
Ruth, Counsellor

Eating disorders thrive on shame and secrecy, trapping young people into thinking that there is no way out. Through the three-session Youth Track, tastelife provides information, education and a way forward. This is a strategic move in the fight against the illness.

YOUTH
TRACK

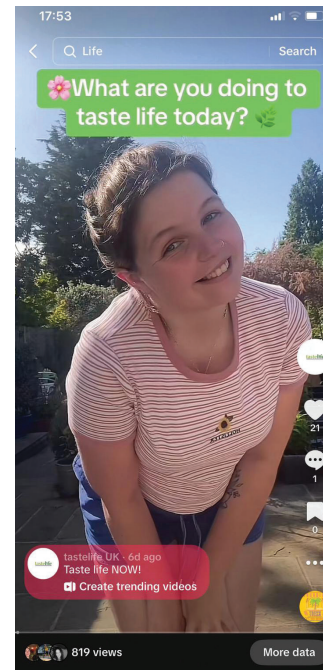
WHO IS TELLING YOU WHAT TO THINK?

- How should I look?
- What should I be wearing?
- What should I be doing?
- What should I be eating?
- Anything else?

Teachers rate Youth Track for its beneficial impact on pupils' understanding of eating disorders.



© Sara Kurfess



10,000+

young people have access to Youth Track since 2019

100%

of students improved their understanding of eating disorders

Young people are living under enormous pressures from social media and peer groups. tastelife's social media feed shares positive messages about food, body image and dealing with emotions.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT YOUTH TRACK

- 'Youth Track has made me aware that anyone can be struggling [with an eating disorder] and has given me more confidence to help and talk to them.' - Ellie, school pupil
- 'I now know it's ok to ask for help.' - Mark, school pupil
- 'I found learning the difference between disordered eating and an eating disorder really helpful.' - Anna, school pupil
- 'The PSHE teachers are really grateful for the great resources - thank you!' - Liz, School Chaplain
- 'Youth Track helped the young people to talk about mental health and eating disorders in a safe environment' - Tom, Youth Pastor

“

'Statistically, 13 to 17 year olds are at highest risk of developing an eating disorder (NICE Guidelines 2020). Myths, misunderstanding and secrecy fan the flames but Youth Track brings truth and opens conversations.'

—
Cherry Dakin
Youth Track Coordinator

LOOKING WITH HOPE TOWARDS THE FUTURE.

Much of our future work centres on prevention of eating disorders amongst young people, with exciting plans in the pipeline:

- Development of brand new lessons for Primary Schools about balanced eating and how food can affect the body and emotions.
- Expansion of current Youth Track materials to create a full suite of PSHE lessons from Year 3 to Year 10.
- Watch this space as we launch an early intervention resource for professionals working 1-2-1 with young people who show early signs of eating disorders.

“

'Youth Track gave [the students] a better understanding of disordered eating and eating disorders. It equipped them with the language and understanding to talk about their own struggles. 10/10 for impact!'

—
Katherine
School Counsellor





WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

'BREAKING THE TABOO'

Making it possible to talk about eating disorders for anyone and everyone.

As a complementary service to the NHS, participants can self-refer to our courses, or be referred by statutory services. In addition, tastelife is resourcing companies, health services, counselling centres, charities, schools, churches, youth organisations and more to talk about eating disorders. We work with anyone who wants to understand eating disorders and how to respond appropriately, no matter the context. We also offer seminars, teaching sessions and workshops, with information about eating disorders, and the possibility of recovery, based on research and lived experience.

'I once heard a lady say: "tastelife saved my life". These are some of the most powerful four words I have ever heard. They opened my eyes to the huge impact that tastelife has on people's lives.'

Richard Mason, Chair of Trustees



RECOGNISING FAITH

The university-accredited tastelife community course is suitable for and welcomes those of all faiths and none. We also offer unique, faith-based resources for use in Christian settings for participants who request these. We work with churches, enabling them to offer effective help to their surrounding communities for those affected by eating disorders.

Our innovative research project with Worcester and Coventry Universities centres around the relationship between spirituality, eating disorders and social media. The outcomes of four focus groups have opened up conversations with:

- Faith-based organisations about eating disorders, and how they can support people even better.
- Medical organisations about how spirituality may affect those with eating disorders, and how they can facilitate the potential value of this.
- The eating disorder community about the varying impact of social media, how to embrace the good and avoid the unhelpful.



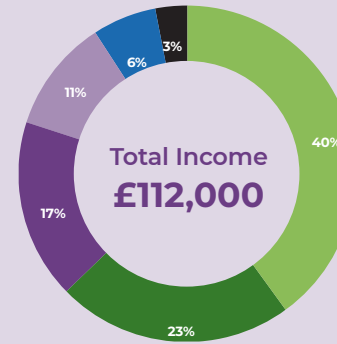
FINANCE AND THE FUTURE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRECIOUS SUPPORT!

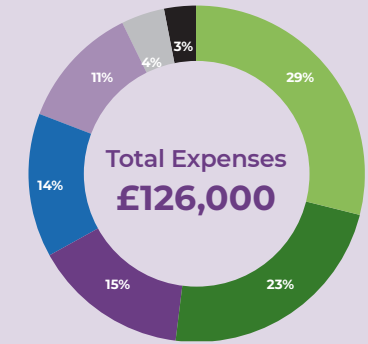
How your financial support is changing the story of eating disorder recovery and why it is so vital going forward.

Financial provision from generous individuals, trusts and churches has been foundational to tastelife turning ten! Not to mention birthday fundraisers, sponsored events, Big Give donations... all of these have played a vital part in bringing hope and help to people affected by eating disorders.

Looking ahead, we not only dream about eating disorder recovery, but about more prevention work too. With your help, we will continue to change the story of eating disorders for the better, expanding our reach and creating new resources informed by the latest research. One big dream is to create an online portal and e-learning platform which could be used by health professionals, schools, youth groups, tastelife leaders as well as individuals and families. This could impact thousands of people of all ages, and enable more working together with other charities, organisations and the NHS.



- Grants from trusts
- Big Give
- Individual Donors
- tastelife Services
- Sales
- Church Donors



- Courses and Services
- Vision and Development
- Operations
- Youthtrack
- Marketing and Fundraising
- Training Course Delivery
- Governance and Compliance

Values represented in this chart are based on interim figures for the year 2022/2023 and are subject to review by Independent Examiner

£50K

will create an online web portal and e-learning platform..

£15K

will produce new Youth Track resources for Primary and Secondary schools..

£10K

will develop intervention resources for 1-2-1 use with young people.

FUNDRAISING STORIES



♥ MANON

skied down a mountain in just a bikini and sky-dived from over 13,000 feet raising well over £1000



♥ THE NURSING SOCIETY

at the University of Southampton raised over £500 by doing a charity netball tournament for tastelife!



♥ JONNY

ran the Belfast marathon and raised nearly £2000 for tastelife

“

'It is scary that so many young people are suffering from eating disorders. Please reach out for help instead of struggling alone. tastelife UK is an amazing group of people who truly care. They will teach you baby steps and will support you through to wellness and will never let you down. Going to tastelife was the best thing I have ever done.'

—

Mary, tastelife supporter

“

'Occasionally in life you uncover hidden gems. tastelife is one of those gems. Their training on eating disorders and how we can support young people and their families was clear, and their lived experience added such impact and power.'

—

Matt Brown, Grace Foundation



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