

# Book chronicles young woman's battle with anorexia

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At the age of 19, Marina Abdel Malak weighed 55 pounds — the average weight of a 9-year-old.

The young Mississauga woman was wasting away from an eating disorder that was ravaging her body.

Her ordeal started in a Grade 9 gym class when she stepped on the scale and heard snorts of derision coming from the girls around her. It culminated some four years later with Malak being rushed by her parents to a hospital emergency room, where nurses were shocked at how she could weigh so little and still be alive.

"One nurse told me that it was stupid, and that I was going to kill myself," she said.

Malak still refused to eat, arguing she was not trying to kill herself but just trying to lose weight.

After two weeks in the hospital, Malak woke up one day feeling

like she couldn't breathe. An X-ray showed she had pneumonia. She was rushed to the ICU and hooked up to a ventilator. She was hardly ever awake, and when she did open her eyes she saw her family and priests from her church praying for her.

"At 19 years old, I was going to die because of starvation," she says. "At 19, the cause of my death would have been a eating disorder."

Malak was lucky; although her kidneys had failed, the organs eventually made an unbelievable recovery.

Following a stay in an inpatient eating disorder program, she recovered enough to be sent home. Malak had spent nearly four months in the hospital.

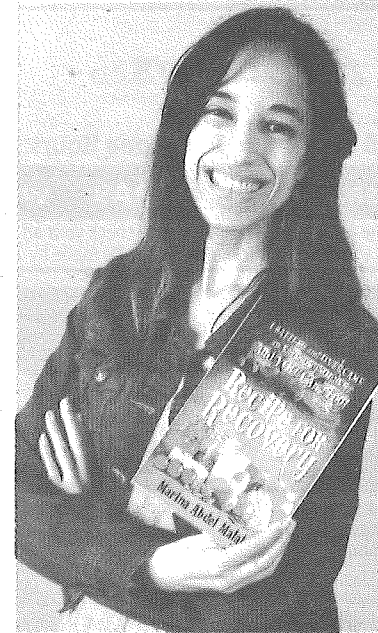
"I consider myself blessed that I was able to make it out alive," she says.

Fast forward to today — two years later — and Malak, now 21,

has not only won her battle with anorexia, she's in her final year of nursing at McMaster University in Hamilton and currently doing her clinical rotation at Credit Valley Hospital. Even more remarkable, she has written a book called *Recipe for Recovery: I Battled and Overcame an Eating Disorder, and You Can, Too!*

"(It's) not meant to be a depressing tale of my experiences," she writes in the introduction. "Rather, I am going to give you an inner look at what exactly goes through the mind of a 'starving anorexic,' and to help you understand why recovery is such a difficult journey."

Published by General Store Publishing House Inc., the first three chapters recounts Malak's personal experience; chapters four through 13 give the reader more information about eating disorders: what they are and what they do to victims. The chapters, writ-



Marina Abdel Malak has written a book about her battle with anorexia.

Staff photo by Rob Beintema

ten in an easy-to-understand and engaging manner, are filled with tips and tools to help the sufferer

along the way to recovery.

About one in 30 women in this country will suffer from one or both forms — anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa — in her lifetime. While most sufferers are women, men are affected too.

"EDs cause the most death among all psychiatric illnesses, and thus, early identification and treatments are essential," says Malak.

An active advocate for the Toronto-based National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC), she's taking that message to schools and organizations, and now to the wider public and caregivers with her book.

"Marina's message that full recovery from an eating disorder is possible and inspiring. Her writing is passionate and comes from the heart," says Jackie Grandy, NEDIC's outreach and education coordinator.

*Recipe for Recovery* is available from the publisher at [gsp.com](http://gsp.com).

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