

Bulimia Author Rowland Speaks

By Shelly Ball
Of The Print

"Is today the day, God? Is today the day that it ends for me?"

Former television journalist Cynthia Rowland asked this haunting question each morning during the twelve years she suffered from Bulimarexia (Bulimia), a potentially-fatal eating disorder that is reportedly occurring at epidemic levels across the nation.

Rowland, who originally grew up in Portland, spoke on campus Jan. 10 about her personal struggle with Bulimia and how she overcame it. She also answered questions from the audience.

Ms. Magazine has reported that 45 percent of all college coeds have a form of Bulimia, and as many as seven million women (the majority of the victims) between the ages of 10 and 52 are plagued with the disease, according to a December 1983 report in Parade Magazine.

Bulimia is characterized by repeated episodes of binge eating, followed by self-deprecating thoughts and fear of gaining weight, after which its victims purge themselves from the binges through self-induced vomiting. Most Bulimics also take laxatives and/or diuretics to help insure against gaining weight.

Rowland has given up her career as a television journalist and is currently touring the country to lecture on her experience with Bulimia. She is also the executive director of the Bulimia Foun-

ation of America, and she said she is spending her time spreading the word about the destructiveness of the disease because she is afraid it may be treated as a fad on college campuses.

"They (students) think it's a dieting technique, but it's not, it's an addiction," Rowland said. It is this kind of thinking that she said makes her wonder "How many people are dying and don't know it?"

Rowland explained that Bulimia is usually a symptom that some kind of trauma has happened to the person and they haven't learned how to deal with it. Although she didn't begin the binge-purge addiction until she was 16 (she herself was led to believe Bulimia was a good dieting technique) Rowland said the basis for her problem developed when she was four years old.

It was at this time that Rowland said she suffered a traumatic burn caused by a vaporizer. She was hospitalized, during which time she thought her parents never came to visit her, when in actuality they did come to the hospital but were not allowed in her room.

Rowland said she developed feelings of abandonment through this experience, and she learned how to handle her own problems instead of seeking out her parents. "At four years old I became a miniature adult," she said.

Later on, Rowland said she learned to substitute the comfort of loved ones with food. She learned to not need people by shutting them out. "I could have had it (comfort), but I didn't want to

bother anyone," she said.

At one point during her struggle with Bulimia, which she describes as "like a monster," Rowland was consuming up to 20,000 calories and up to 100 laxatives a day. She said that eating so much food in such a short amount of time (usually less than two hours) actually made her look pregnant, after which she would rid herself of the food by vomiting, "I thought if I gained weight no one would like me," she said.

During the years she had Bulimia, Rowland said she did try to get help, but most doctors could do little for her outside of prescribing drugs like Valium. Some doctors told her to just stop what she was doing, or that she needed to find a man to solve her problems.

Before she went for specialized help, Rowland said she suffered a near stroke (she woke up one morning blind, deaf and paralyzed on one side of her body) and she contemplated suicide. "I literally envisioned taking a gun to my head," she said.

Shortly thereafter, Rowland, then 28, checked herself in at the Minirth-Meier Clinic, which has special programs for treating eating disorders like Bulimia and Anorexia Nervosa. Located in the Dallas area of Texas, Rowland spent three months there undergoing treatment.

Through the hospitalization, group therapy and some hypnosis, Rowland

learned what it was that drove her to become Bulimic. But her recovery was not easy. She said she underwent painful drug withdrawals due to the massive amounts of laxatives she had been taking, and she had suicidal thoughts while in the hospital.

Rowland explained that for her Bulimia, a slow form of suicide, was her way of getting back at her parents for what she thought to be their abandonment of her. "I was 28 years old but seeing through a little girl's eyes," she said.

Once released from the hospital, Rowland said she first went public about her ordeal in Oklahoma City (she and her parents left Portland for Oklahoma when she was 16). She has since written a book, titled "The Monster Within," which has recently been released.

Rowland also advises people to be careful where they go for treatment, as she said some hospitals may only be taking advantage of the demand for help and don't have properly trained doctors. She said some programs can be expensive, averaging \$2,500 a week. Rowland's own three-month hospital bill came to \$30,000.

Those interested in information on treatment centers here in Oregon should look into St. Vincent, Portland Adventist and Holiday Park Hospitals' eating disorder programs. Some of these programs may offer free or reasonably-priced therapy sessions.

Security training program begins Feb. 11

Imagine going to college for only five weeks, five days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., then walking out the door completely trained for a career. Clackamas Community College will offer just such a program beginning Feb. 11.

The college is the only one in the entire Northwest offering a course known as the Security Officer Academy. The 15 pupils allowed in the academy have approximately 13 instructors who teach them such things as laws of arrest, electronical surveillance, warehouse security, public relations and much more.

"This is a fast moving field, lots of job opportunity. Some of the higher-paid security positions make anywhere from \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year. Of course the more realistic 'Montgomery Ward' security guard starts out somewhere around \$6 an hour," Jim

Brouillette, director of the Security Academy said.

According to the academy's flyer, the private security officer is a position of increasing

responsibility and complexity. A private security officer may be required to complete extensive investigation, make arrests, save a life and protect a range of valuable assets and people, from high-tech research secrets to a corporate

executive. The position demands a trained professional with the ability to make sound judgements.

The academy devotes 160 hours to classroom instruction, which is broken down into 80 hours of basic training, 40 hours of advance training, and 40 hours of asset protection. This is followed by a 40-lesson course in firearms training, which includes live firing with a .38 pistol and a 12-gauge shotgun, according to the course's outline.



Jim Brouillette

Clackamas Community College

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