**The Thin Line**

***A powerful play that breaks the silence on eating disorders.***

Eating disorders in schools are as prevalent as alcohol and drug abuse, and 86 percent of people report that their eating disorder started before the age of 20.\* And an estimated 25 percent of college students suffer from eating disorders.\*\*

Eating disorders among our young people are well hidden, dangerously glamorized, socially contagious, and **becoming epidemic**. It is the mental illness with the highest fatality rate; yet the stigma surrounding the disease allows many to suffer alone to face the threat of death or severe lifelong ailments. There is growing concern that the dominant national discourse on tackling obesity could exacerbate disordered eating among our children.

But prevention and recovery are possible. Is it time to begin the conversation at *your* school?

***The Thin Line*** uses live theatre to break the silence on eating disorders, reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness, and pave the way to prepare young adults for the intense pressure of high school, college, and beyond. The program helps begin the conversation about eating disorders by illustrating the pain of one girl’s struggle and her loved ones’ resolve to understand and to help.

Composed to present a wider understanding of the impact of eating disorders, *The Thin Line* features four characters with distinct voices all played by a professional actor. Characters include (in order of appearance): Cindy, a friend; Ellen, a girl struggling with an eating disorder; Ellen’s negative voice; and Ellen’s mother. As the play unfolds, Ellen’s illness progresses and the complications and stakes get higher.

Ellen: *“I know how hideous I look. I’m dying to be heard, to find someone who understands. I’m trying. This is not fun for me. People think it’s a big joke. They talk behind my back. Or they talk to me like I’m an infant who can’t understand anything. Or like I’m going to fall apart any second . . . . There used to be more to know about me than how many ounces I’ve gained or lost today . . . . It’s not that I don’t want to grow up, it’s just that things get harder and harder to control, and you get more and more responsibility at the same time.”*

The Voice of Ellen’s eating disorder: *“The medical term anorexia means ‘absence of hunger or appetite’ but you and I alone know that that’s not true, that you have a huge appetite, you’re extremely hungry, but you’re willing to deny yourself your existence.”*

Ellen’s Mother: *“. . . we had thought she was better. Now, the drains haven’t been working right, and this week we got home to find the basement flooded, a pipe burst . . . the plumbers suggested that we either install a garbage disposal, or don’t put excessive amounts of food down the drain The way they said it, they knew. They were just being polite; apparently they had seen this before.”*

Cindy: *“No matter how much I want to help her get better, I can’t get better for her. She has to do it. And I have to be honest with her. I have to be honest with her until she can learn to be honest with herself. So, I finally talked to Ellen.”*

As a result of seeing *The Thin Line,* **90% of audience members knew exactly where to go to get help if they or someone they know is suffering from an eating disorder.**