

Anorexia has totally taken charge of your mind and body. It controls every brain cell and consumes every thought in your mind. It convinces you that you will never survive without it. It has made you blind to reality. There is no escape unless someone helps you to freedom.

Anorexia starts off as a small voice who claims to be your friend, knows what you need, and will help you if you listen and obey its rules.



The friendly anorexic voice gets stronger and makes more seductive promises.



LIFE OF ANOREXIA

The voice has now become brutal in its demands. The more you give, the more controlling anorexia becomes. The harder you try, the more dissatisfied anorexia is with your efforts. It tells you everyone is your enemy and not to listen to them because they will make you fail.



The once friendly voice becomes more demanding and relentless. It tells you that you are not trying hard enough and that you should be able to do better.

LIFE OF ANOREXIA – THE 5 STAGES - INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLINICIAN

1. AN is a small voice who wants to be your friend

At this point you want to find out how AN came into their life. Was it a response to comments re weight? Was it peer pressure? Was it in response to desire to be healthy? Example – It may have started with a small voice that told you “Look how good someone else looks, how much fun they are having, if you were thinner, you could be like, feel like, them, etc.” Explore adolescent’s individual reason if possible.

2. AN makes seductive promises

Clinician needs to explore the promises AN makes to the young person.
What does AN tell you it can do for you? What promises is it making to you?

When rapport is established, Clinicians can gently challenge the promises. - Young person may say “Being thin makes me feel better about myself”. Clinician – Can you tell me how it does that? Further exploration areas - How does starving your body make you feel better? How does being in hospital make you feel better? How does missing all the school, sports, etc make you feel better? Do you think people will like you better if you are thin? Who will like you better or who likes you better now? Does it promise you will have more friends? How many more friends do you have now?” Do you like people because of how much they weigh?

3. AN becomes demanding

At this stage the AN becomes more demanding and teams up with the inner critics. Here the clinician can explore the relationship with AN. Are the demands seen in a positive or negative light. Inner critics can also be explored with the cards – who are they? what do they say? etc. How do these critics work for you? (Use trait, critic & sage cards).

4. AN becomes abusive

By this stage AN become abusive and can be likened to a terrorist. The adolescent is usually aware but struggles to fight back. The clinician can use the analogy of being in an abusive relationship. Would you put up with this behaviour from your boyfriend? Help me understand why it’s ok for AN to say such horrible things to you? What are the core fears of letting AN go?
Later in treatment Clinicians need to help adolescent find internal resources/strategies to help fight against AN. (Use trait, critic & sage cards).

5. AN becomes totally overwhelming

At this stage the adolescent is totally overwhelmed by AN either willingly or unwillingly so clinician can talk about the pros and cons of AN what it gives and what it takes.
Can use choice point analogy – If you go down AN path what will your life look like? If you go down healthy path, what will your life look like?

The goal is to assess: the strength of the young person’s relationship with AN; the strength of the anorexic voice/inner critics; the core ED fears; and the AN rules.