

“I didn’t know that it was bad. To be honest, I didn’t even know bulimia was a thing,” she said. “I’m just throwing up my food, who cares?”

Binge, purge, repeat.

For senior **Renee LaFreniere**, this cycle occurred frequently, starting her freshman year and continuing through her junior year of high school.

“I was a typical middle school kid, so I was pretty chubby,” LaFreniere said. “I knew going into high school I wanted to lose weight and kind of start over. Unfortunately, I did it the wrong way and became bulimic.”

After losing 20 pounds to start off her freshman year, compliments from friends and family came rolling in. With more and more compliments, she became more and more inclined to alter her body.

“It was really hard because I changed completely how I looked and my friends were complimenting me, and I was getting compliments from my family telling me I looked great and did a great job,” LaFreniere said. “As a freshman, that got in my head and I was like, ‘Oh, looks like I’m doing it the right way.’”

For months, LaFreniere hid the truth behind her weight loss. Concealed by bathroom doors, she continued to lose weight until one night when she revealed her secret to her friends.

“I was so surprised and couldn’t believe it,” senior **Alison Luzenske** said. “She masked it so well.”

Although LaFreniere disguised her disorder for a period of time, her mom discovered the truth.

“At the time I thought [my parents] were against me,” LaFreniere said. “I was in denial. They were trying to help me, and it was just scary.”

After finding out, LaFreniere’s parents took her to see her pediatrician who suggested some solutions.

“I had to realize that they wanted to help me because they loved me,” LaFreniere said.

Her mom, **Karen LaFreniere**, and her dad, **Joe LaFreniere**, possessed mutual feelings.

“We were worried about her health and well-being,” Joe said. “She’s our daughter and we love her, so we

wanted to get it fixed right away.”

Renee’s friends took a different approach when they showed their support. Any assistance they provided made a difference in her eyes, she said.

“My friends would help me by honestly making jokes,” Renee said. “To me, making jokes was like, ‘Wow Renee this is stupid. Why are you hurting yourself? You don’t need to do this.’”

By making jokes and comforting her, she maintained her support system.

“I always wanted her to know that if she was having a bad day, she could come to me, she could talk to me, she could unload everything, and I was just going to be there for her,” Luzenske said.

Friends and family members continued to check up on her consistently. From conversing to praying with her, everyone expressed their concerns.

“As of today, I feel like she’s doing a lot better,” Luzenske said. “Because she did mask it so well, it’s hard for me to tell if she’s still in that place where she was, so I just try and always check up on her when I can.”

Renee LaFreniere’s parents made it a priority to do the same.

“We did a lot of talking, we did a lot of praying,” Karen said. “We still communicate and talk.”

With the support of friends and family, Renee realized her mistakes. As she spoke, her voice trembled and her eyes watered.

“I was online one day looking at the effects of [bulimia], and I read that it can cause infertility,” Renee said. “I’ve always wanted to grow up and have a huge family, so that scared me.”

With that in mind, she shared her plans for the future. Looking ahead, she fixated on her ambitions and how she would like to maximize her life in a healthy way.

“It’s still a struggle when I eat, but I have a true passion for nutrition,” Renee said. “Me focusing on what I want to do when I’m older, and helping kids with my problem, and special needs kids with their diets, helps me and my food decisions.”

While Renee focused on her future career, Luzenske shared her current thoughts about LaFreniere.

“She’s back to happy, fun, loving Renee,” Luzenske said. “It’s not controlling her life anymore, and it’s kind of inspiring to me. I’ve seen all the effects of it, and how much it really takes over your entire life.”

With a grin on her face, Renee recalled the amount of time passed since her last episode.

“It’s such a sense of accomplishment; it was so exciting to see how long it had been,” Renee said.

Binge and purge no longer defined her. By maintaining a healthy diet and exercising often, she described herself as happy and proud of her appearance.

Sometimes while looking in the mirror she tells herself, “Wow, you look hot.”