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Explanation Paper

Even elementary kids can reckon that the human body needs food to exist and function. However, one in two hundred American females is starving. Paradoxically, this fact has nothing to do with poverty, unemployment or lack of social welfare; rather it is a consequence of a deliberate, fully conscious choices. These people suffer from infamous, thoroughly examined, but still invincible evil, self-produced, self-maintained, and an almost beloved illness. And its name is Anorexia.

It is estimated that 24 million Americans and 70 million individuals worldwide suffer from different kinds of eating disorders: even though anorexia might not be the most spread illness from this list, it is for sure the most dangerous one (*www.anad.org*). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services states that 5-10 % of anorexics die within 10 years after the development of the disease, about 20 % die within 20 years, and only 60 % are reported to have fully recovered. It has also found out that 20 % of the patients die as a result of the harmful (and in many cases lethal) effects on their health inevitably caused by starvation. These include low blood pressure, slow breathing, decrease in mineral levels necessary for maintaining a normal heartbeat, severe nerve and brain damage, hindered bone growth and, in the very end, irreversible breakdown of crucial organs ("*Eating Disorders: About More Than Food*"). For women, Anorexia leads to loss of menstruation and often to infertility. Besides, apart from undermining people's physical health, Anorexia leads to a variety of psychological problems with its victims facing fierce depression which often contributes to self-injurious behaviors and even suicides accounting for 0.2 % of all deaths due to Anorexia (Arcelus 726).

The purpose of this PSA is to attract public attention to this issue raising viewers' awareness of the symptoms of Anorexia and encouraging them to take a strong stance if they notice these signs in the behavior of people around. I aspire to evoke people's compassion demasking the ugly truth of lasting affliction and self-destruction which may underpin sudden thinness of their friends and relatives. Patients' determination to hide their disease while subconsciously amplifying its scale renders social commitment and caution the only sure strategies to provide timely and, therefore, more effective response. Only 0.1 % of anorexics ask for professional help whilst 20 % of those

who are not getting treatment do not survive (www.anad.org). The goal of this PSA is to save more lives.

The targeted audience is people from 13 to 45 years old since they are more likely than other parts of the population to suffer from Anorexia or know someone who suffers. Particular emphasis is put on the females both the adolescents and the adults. Studies has shown that women are more prone to Anorexia than men: 50 % of the females between the ages of 18-25 would be rather run over by a truck than being fat, 51% of high school girls diet to become skinnier while in 35% of cases “normal dieting” degrades into a pathological dieting (Gaesser 98). As Alexander Lucas, American psychologist says, ‘dieting and anorexia nervosa are on a continuum’ (20).

The platform for my PSA is Instagram since it has become extremely popular among my targeted audience. The maximum length of Instagram video is 2 minutes meaning that my 1 minute and 50 seconds PSA fits well. I have decided to stick to Instagram as there are many ‘inspiring’ accounts of extremely thin, boney girls that preach eating less and less for the purpose of feeling light and graceful, offering ‘beauty’ as a justification for this irrational pursuit. This is why in my PSA I use a hashtag ‘strive for beauty’ depicting how women’s obsession to be praised and admired for their dieting efforts not only promulgates Anorexia but vigorously consolidates its power over individuals.

The PSA is created in the form of a narrative which shows how ordinary dieting and exercising turns into a full-scale illness. The main character which is a young girl harshly restricts her caloric consumption, measures herself all the time, takes laxatives and purges when she ‘overindulges’, while in reality barely eating at all. The PSA reflects how Anorexia hinders social communications diminishing both the girl’s capacity and desire to interact with her peers and causing depression and lassitude usually untypical for her age. Being controlled by her illness, having a distorted image of her body, she consistently tortures herself committing a slow suicide. The fact that she constantly posts photographs of thin body on Instagram is a way to concern viewers who can recognize their own dependence on social media’s opinion. When people are sinking, they scream for help and try to stay afloat as long as possible. Anorexics act against any instincts of self-preservation: they never admit they are in trouble. The PSA develops the understanding of this tendency to worship and embrace this deadly illness highlighting our civil duty to rescue these helpless people.

To make it more compelling, a powerful song on behalf of Anorexia called *Mi-Weightless* plays throughout the PSA and ends with final shots of the climax of the girl’s illness. The words ‘I will swallow your sweet soul’ in one phrase explain to the audience what Anorexia is all about. It

also grabs viewers' attention: they know immediately what the PSA's topic is and get interested without seeing yet why this seemingly normal girl has problems. Other persuasion techniques include bird's eye view and close-up shots: the later ones once again attract attention to Instagram posts while the former ones reflect the patient's miserable feeling when being held captive by the disorder. The use of statistics in the end highlights the urgency and scale of the problem.

This PSA intends to demonstrate terrific consequences of Anorexia trying to persuade the victims to stop and, crucially, to stimulate their surroundings to intervene. As Sophia Gore, a former anorexic, recalls: "There is nothing more depressing than waking up to find I don't have the strength to lift my head off the pillow. My organs get smaller as my body eats away at them. And yet I will still argue that I have too many cornflakes in my bowl at breakfast" (76). Her words do hurt. The take-away message of the PSA is that we should not leave the ones who strive for a homicidal 'beauty' to fight their demons alone. We must look after our friends and move rapidly once intimidating signs become transparent until it is not too late.

Bibliography:

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Song used in the PSA - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUC6JTjIzVI>