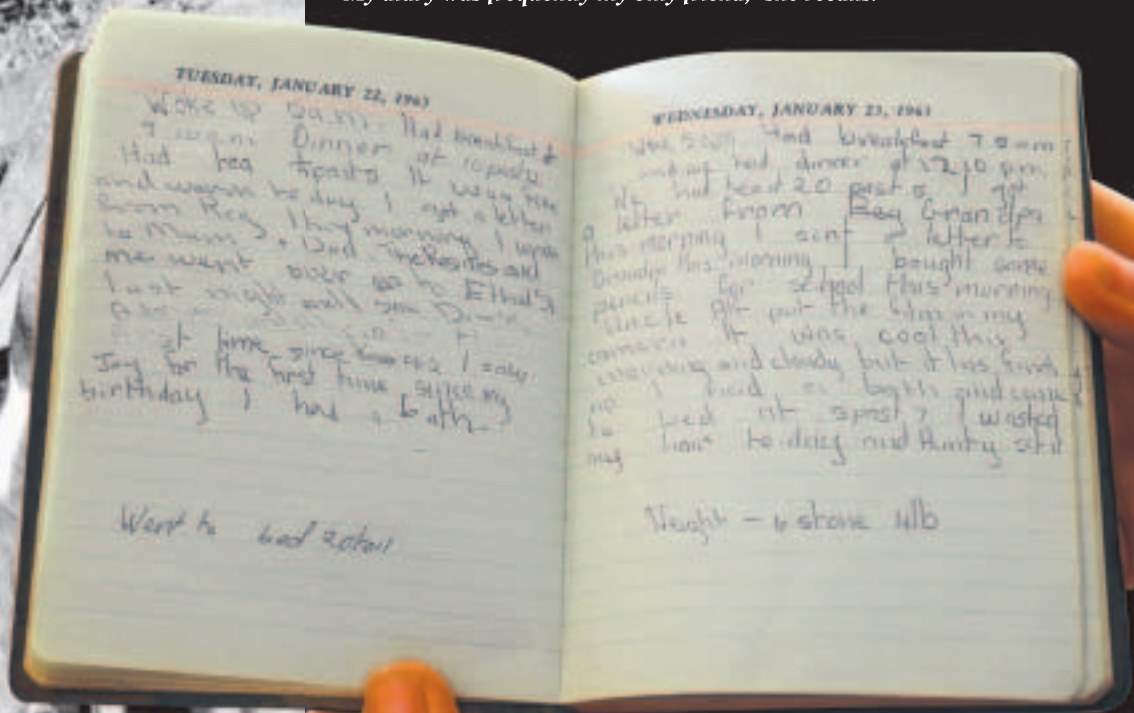


**It was like someone had taken over my brain, telling me what to do, and punishing me if I disobeyed.**

*As a young girl, June felt delighted in her tomboy reputation and at age 11 started starving herself to flatten her chest.*

*June kept diaries documenting daily exercise and food intake ... "My diary was frequently my only friend," she recalls.*



# interrupted

June initially starved herself to flatten her chest. She recalls being horrified to discover her breasts were starting to develop when she was 11 years old.

Her memoir records that her thin arms became covered in soft fine hairs like those on a newborn baby's head. She knew this embarrassed her mother, so she hid inside cardigans, even on the hottest days.

"It (the illness) starved my body and I became emaciated. Eventually I gained weight and everyone, including me, thought I was well again," she says.

"But it hid inside my brain and continued to sabotage my mental and emotional health."

June says the illness made her a mystery to everyone who knew her, including herself. She only knew that she had to lose weight and that food made her scared.

"It was like someone had taken over my brain, telling me what to do, and punishing me if I disobeyed," she says.

Many years on, when she summoned the courage to read her own words, she says she was rewarded with a better understanding of herself and her childhood.

"For decades my life had seemed like a jigsaw puzzle; there were pieces missing. I had gaping holes within," she says.

"My diaries contained clues to help heal and fill those gaps."

The walls of June's home are covered in framed photos of her family.

She says the love and understanding of her four adult children and the life-long friendship of their father inspired her to find a way out of the darkness.

She has been able to stop using medication since the arrival of her three grandchildren, Lachlan, 4, and Ashton and Olivia Rose, both aged 1.

"They accept me for who I am; I love being able to enjoy them in a way I was not able to enjoy my own children because the illness was rampaging when they were that age," she says.

Despite the invaluable help of therapists, June says the most powerful get-well tool is love.

"Families can offer this in loads. Love is the most powerful tonic of all," she says.

June has also co-authored two other books on the subject, *A Collaborative Approach to Eating Disorders* and *My Kid is Back*, which offer insights into how families can use their love, knowledge and skills to overcome anorexia and bulimia.

June says estrangement from her sister, Joy, is a legacy of her illness. The 60-year-old has also been married and divorced three

times and moved home more than 20 times in an attempt to start again and escape her torment.

"One divorce was bad enough, three was unheard of where I grew up," she laughs.

She says the eating disorder developing in the small 12-year-old girl at the beginning of her book became entrenched, but she wants people to know that she got better.

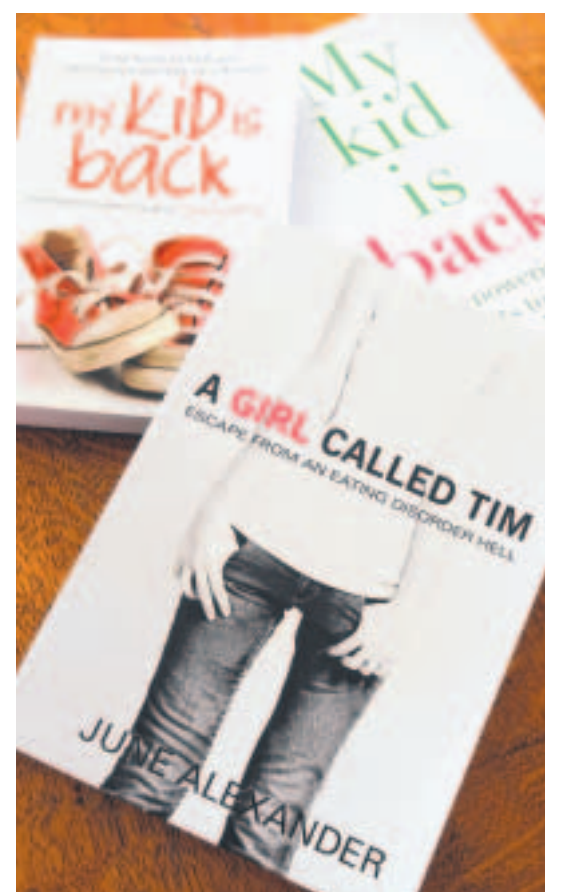
"At any age there is hope. I did a good job of falling in many potholes and down steep crevices, but by reaching out to the people who believed in the real me, I got out of them eventually," she says.

"The best advice I can give is get help early. If you have been suffering in silence, reach out for help today.

"If you suspect a loved one is suffering, encourage them to seek help immediately."

**June Alexander will be at Borders in Westfield Geelong on Friday, April 1 to sign her book *A Girl Called Tim* and talk about her journey.**

**The signing starts at 5pm for 5.30. For more information visit [www.junealexander.com](http://www.junealexander.com)**



*The Clifton Springs author has penned a series of books to help other sufferers understand and tackle the disease.*