

# Inspiring Woman – Making a Difference in the World



## Dr. Nicole Siegfried

This month, I have the pleasure of introducing you to Nicole Siegfried—a psychologist specializing in eating disorders. She is the Executive Director of Magnolia Creek Treatment Center for eating disorders, and—*most importantly*—an eating disorder survivor herself. Within this exclusive interview, Nicole talks about her personal struggles, her own recovery, and what she is doing now to help others in their recovery.

*Thanks so much, Nicole, for your time  
and for sharing your story with us! 😊*

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### ***Tell us a bit about yourself.***

I am the Executive Director of Magnolia Creek Treatment Center for Eating Disorders. I am a clinical psychologist. I received my doctoral degree from Oklahoma State University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at UAB in women's health disorders, including eating disorders. Prior to Magnolia Creek, I was a tenured Associate Professor at Samford University, and I had a private practice exclusively devoted to eating disorders. I am very passionate about my job. **I believe full recovery from eating disorders is possible.** I have been able to share in many individuals' recoveries at Magnolia Creek, and I am celebrating my own 20 year recovery from bulimia.

### ***Tell us about your personal experiences with eating disorders and recovery.***

My story isn't anything glamorous, sensational, or extreme. I didn't almost die. My family didn't have to perform an intervention. I didn't even have to be hospitalized. In fact, **like many people with eating disorders, I don't think anyone would have known I had an eating disorder just by looking at me.** I did well in school; I had a lot of friends; I had a boyfriend and a supportive family. On the surface, I didn't seem to "have a reason" to have an eating disorder, which actually made me feel more guilty for my secret. I was bulimic. I was empty and fragmented. I was concerned more with what people thought about me than who I really was. I was a charlatan, I lied to my friends and family, stole money from my roommates, and lost my "self" to the eating disorder. I was miserable.

Finally, my parents found out, so I began treatment. I thought that beginning treatment would be the "turn around" - that once I came clean, I wouldn't want to do it anymore. This didn't happen. So I began pretending to recover. I worked hard to develop the facade of recovery to overlay my charlatan mask. I kept waiting to feel better, waiting for it to be easier to fight the binge or fight the purge. That time never came. I never "felt" like recovering. I told myself every night that "tomorrow will be another day"- a new day where I would feel like recovering. Instead, every day brought with it another spoke in the wheel of the cycle of the disorder.

Finally, I'd had enough- not really "enough of the eating disorder" or even "enough of recovery"- but more like I'd had enough of being fraudulent – of living an inauthentic life – of betraying my true self. I remember making a conscious decision to begin recovery – not a decision to stop my disorder. **I realized that trying "not to do something" wasn't working for me – I had to try TO DO something.** I began focusing on the person I wanted to be instead of the person I was trying not to be. I began to get to know myself, which was frightening, because I was afraid I wouldn't like who I was.

The road of recovery was still rocky and I had slips, but I had direction. I went to graduate school; I got married and had children. I still had difficult experiences. I got divorced. My father developed cancer. **But I no longer used my eating disorder to cope.** Today, I believe I am a woman of substance, not because I

have a PhD or even because I recovered from my eating disorder. I'm a woman of substance because I'm finally full- full of life and full of my "self."

**What advice do you have for individuals struggling with an eating disorder?**

I have two pieces of advice. The first is- "**don't wait.**" This relates to my own recovery, and I've seen it in others. We tend to wait to begin recovery - wait until we really want it 100% or wait until we get sicker or wait until we finish school, etc. There is no perfect time to begin recovery. Actually, I'll rephrase that. **There is a perfect time to begin recovery and it's NOW.**

My second piece of advice is to **not give up.** Many people think that once you've gone to treatment that you should be recovered. This is typically not the case. Research shows that a full recovery can take up to 5 years (or more) and that it often takes multiple treatment stays. **Returning to treatment doesn't mean you've failed.** It means that you're recovering.

**Tell us more about Magnolia Creek.**

Magnolia Creek is located outside of Birmingham, Alabama. We are a 10-bed residential facility with an 8-patient partial hospitalization program with apartments for out-of-town patients. We are devoted to providing the highest quality of care for our patients. Our staff is made up of well-trained, talented, and committed professionals, many who are recovered themselves, who **believe in our patients and their full recovery.**



**Magnolia Creek**

TREATMENT CENTER FOR EATING DISORDERS



**What are your goals, how do you see your future?**

I love my job! My goals are to continue my work at Magnolia Creek. **It is so rewarding to be able to share in the recovery of the women at our facility.** I am continually humbled by their perseverance, strength, and resilience.

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For more information about Dr. Nicole Siegfried, visit <http://www.magnolia-creek.com/staff/nicole-siegfried>  
You can also connect with her on **Facebook**.

For more information about Magnolia Creek, visit [www.magnolia-creek.com](http://www.magnolia-creek.com)  
You can also give them a call at **1-888-762-4665**

You can also connect with Magnolia Creek on **Twitter** (<http://twitter.com/creekspeak>) and **Facebook**  
(profile name: Magnolia Creek Residential Treatment Center for Eating Disorders)

To watch a **personal video message** from Dr. Nicole Siegfried about Magnolia Creek, visit <http://www.magnolia-creek.com/> (scroll down – you'll find the video on the bottom left side)

