

Laura Collins Lyster-Mensch, MS

Author, Founder & Executive Director, F.E.A.S.T., VIRGINIA

Laura Collins Lyster-Mensch is an author, founder and Executive Director of Families Empowered And Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders (F.E.A.S.T.) – an international, non-profit organization of, and for caregivers of loved ones living with eating disorders. She has served on the Board of Directors since 2007.

Laura is also a Co-Founder of Charlotte's Helix – a UK DNA project contributing to the search for the genetic underpinning of eating disorders. Since 2007, she has also been an Associate Member of the Academy for Eating Disorders.

Laura became an activist for improved eating disorder treatment after her teenage daughter had and recovered from an eating disorder.



She has authored and published two books on eating disorders, including *Eating With Your Anorexic: A Mother's Memoir* and *Throwing Starfish Across the Sea* (with Charlotte Bevan). She has won multiple awards for her writing and advocacy work for eating disorders, including the Meehan/Hartley Award for Public Service and/or Advocacy by the Academy for Eating Disorders in 2014.

Laura has organized and hosted five international eating disorder conferences, and has presented and spoken at many international eating disorder conferences, including the International Conference on Eating Disorders.

She writes columns and produces podcasts on children's mental health, and has been interviewed by many high-profile publications, including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Laura is a strong advocate for the Eating Disorders Genetics Initiative (EDGI) – the world's largest genetic research study of eating disorders ever performed, that aims to identify the hundreds of genes that influence a person's risk of developing anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder, to improve treatment, and ultimately, save lives.

"Better understanding of the genetic code behind eating disorders benefits families. This information can point to new and more personalized treatments for our loved ones and transform fear to action. Genetic research is offering parents tools to understand and support our sons and daughters," said Laura.

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Phil Bridges
University of North Carolina (UNC), US
phil.bridges@unchealth.unc.edu
(919) 457-6347

Casey Adams Jones
C. Adams Agency, US
info@cadamsagency.com
(336) 906-5246

Kirsten Bruce & Mel Kheradi
VIVA! Communications, AUS
kirstenbruce@vivacommunications.com.au / mel@vivacommunications.com.au
+61 401 717 566 | +61 421 551 257 | +61 2 9968 3741