

Guidelines for Parents

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M o u n t a i n N e s t
Eating Disorder Treatment by Recovered Professionals

Introduction



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Agenda

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ What is an Eating Disorder?
- ❖ General Guidelines for Parents
- ❖ Commonly Asked Questions by Parents Answered by an Eating Disorder Specialist
- ❖ Questions

What is an Eating Disorder?

- ❖ Eating disorders -- such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder – include extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues.
- ❖ Eating disorders are serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences for females and males.
- ❖ “You don’t have to look like you have an Eating Disorder to have one”... A client’s answer to the question: What do you wish your family and friends understood about eating disorders?
- ❖ <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/general-information>
(National Eating Disorders Association)

What is Anorexia Nervosa?

- ❖ Anorexia Nervosa — often simply called anorexia — is an eating disorder characterized by an abnormally low body weight (although not required in Atypical Anorexia Nervosa), intense fear of gaining weight and a distorted perception of body weight, shape and size.
- ❖ People with anorexia place a high value on controlling their weight and shape, using extreme efforts that tend to significantly interfere with activities in their lives.

What is Anorexia Nervosa?

- ❖ To prevent weight gain or to continue losing weight, people with anorexia usually severely restrict the amount of food they eat. They may control calorie intake by vomiting after eating or by misusing laxatives, diet aids, diuretics or enemas.
- ❖ They may also try to lose weight by exercising excessively.
- ❖ Some people with anorexia binge and purge, similar to individuals who have bulimia nervosa. However, people with anorexia generally struggle with an abnormally low body weight, while individuals with bulimia typically are normal to above normal weight. No matter how weight loss is achieved, the person with anorexia has an intense fear of gaining weight.
- ❖ Anorexia isn't really about food. It's an unhealthy way to try to cope with emotional problems. When you have anorexia, you often equate thinness with self-worth.
- ❖ Anorexia can be very difficult to overcome. But with treatment, you can gain a better sense of who you are, return to healthier eating habits and reverse some of anorexia's serious complications.

What is Bulimia Nervosa?

- ❖ Bulimia nervosa is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by a cycle of bingeing and compensatory behaviors such as self-induced vomiting designed to undo or compensate for the effects of binge eating.
- ❖ Frequent episodes of consuming very large amounts of food followed by behaviors to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting, laxatives, enemas, diuretics, over-exercise, diet pills, ect.
- ❖ A feeling of being out of control during the binge-eating episodes.
- ❖ Self-esteem overly related to body image.

What is Binge Eating Disorder?

- ❖ Binge eating disorder (BED) is an eating disorder characterized by recurrent episodes of eating large quantities of food (often very quickly and to the point of discomfort); a feeling of a loss of control during the binge; experiencing shame, distress or guilt afterwards; and not regularly using unhealthy compensatory measures (e.g., purging) to counter the binge eating.
- ❖ Binge eating disorder is a severe, life-threatening and treatable eating disorder. Common aspects of BED include functional impairment, suicide risk and a high frequency of co-occurring psychiatric disorders.

Emotional and Mental Characteristics

- ❖ Experiencing feelings of anger, anxiety, worthlessness, or shame. Engaging in an ED behavior is a means of relieving tension or numbing negative feelings.
- ❖ Co-occurring conditions such as depression or PTSD may be present. Those with an ED may also experience social isolation, moodiness, and irritability.
- ❖ Feeling disgust about one's perceived body size, shape, weight.
- ❖ Avoiding conflict; trying to "keep the peace."
- ❖ Certain thought patterns and personality types are associated with eating disorders. These include:
 - ❖ Rigid and inflexible "all or nothing" thinking
 - ❖ A strong need to be in control
 - ❖ Difficulty expressing feelings and needs
 - ❖ Perfectionistic tendencies
 - ❖ Working hard to please others

If someone you know is struggling with an eating disorder, please know that this is a serious issue and could be life-threatening

- ❖ Crow and colleagues studied 1,885 individuals with anorexia nervosa (N=177), bulimia nervosa (N=906), or eating disorder not otherwise specified (N=802) over 8 to 25 years. The investigators used computerized record linkage to the National Death Index, which provides vital status information for the entire United States, including cause of death extracted from death certificates. Crow and colleagues found that crude mortality rates were 4.0% for anorexia nervosa, 3.9% for bulimia nervosa, and 5.2% for eating disorder not otherwise specified. They also found a high suicide rate in bulimia nervosa. The elevated mortality risks for bulimia nervosa and eating disorder not otherwise specified were similar to those for anorexia nervosa.

Factors Contributing to the Development of Eating Disorders

- ❖ Vulnerable personality
- ❖ Family functioning style
- ❖ Dieting
- ❖ Major life change
- ❖ Onset of pubertal hormonal activity
- ❖ Social pressure for extreme thinness
- ❖ Genetic predisposition

General Guidelines for Parents

- ❖ Focus on health not weight
- ❖ Focus on feelings and your relationship with your child, not just weight and/ or eating behaviors
- ❖ The family should go on with their lives as normally as possible and try not to let your child's eating disorder disrupt things unless the situation is severe and it is necessary to do so.
- ❖ Set limits and rules in a caring and reasonable, but also firm and consistent manner

General Guidelines for Parents

- ❖ Help all of the family members communicate with each other
- ❖ Demanding change or berating your child for their eating disordered habits is not enough to improve the situation in the long run
- ❖ Avoid power struggles
- ❖ If your child is already very ill with an ED, avoid asking him/her how you can help
- ❖ Avoid catering to unreasonable requests about food
- ❖ Generally speaking, it is unwise to allow your child to shop cook or feed the family or others.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ❖ “When my child asks me if she or he looks, or is, fat, what should I say?”

- ❖ “I pay for my daughter to go to a diet clinic, but when I find candy and cookie wrappers in her car, or room, or even when I realize she is not sticking to the diet, I get upset and don’t know what to do.”

❖ “What about weighing? Should I take away the scale?”

❖ “Should I weigh my daughter? Should I have her weighed?”

❖ “Should I take my child to a doctor?”

- ❖ “My 8-year-old son is definitely overweight. Our doctor told me I should control his eating, and my relatives pressure me to do so. What can I do to help him?”

❖ “Should I insist my child eat meals with the family?”

- ❖ “My daughter binges on all of the food in the house, costing us money we can’t afford. How do we handle this?”

- ❖ “My daughter spends all of her money on food, the gym; diet pills, laxatives, etc., and then requests money from me that I don’t want to give her. What should I do?”

❖ “How do I find a therapist?”

- ❖ “My daughter has asked for liposuction. She is very overweight and I think it will improve her body image and self-esteem. How should I approach it?”

❖ “If I hear my loved one vomiting what should I do?”

❖ “I came home early and caught my daughter bingeing, what should I have done?”

❖ “I found laxatives in my daughters room, what do I do?”

- ❖ “My daughter can’t eat anywhere but home, what should I do?”

- ❖ Other people want to discuss my child's weight or illness with me, and I need to talk about it also, but this infuriates my child. What should I do?

- ❖ “My child refuses to go to a therapist and is getting worse every week. How can I make her go and if she won’t, what else should I do?”

- ❖ “Our 24 year old daughter is out of control and refuses help. She steals our money and credit cards. She binges on all of our food and vomits in her room and her sister’s bathroom without cleaning up. She also got a ticket for drunk driving and we found out she had 6 parking tickets. We have tried everything. I think we need to ask her to get a job and move out, but my wife says I am too hard on her because she is ill. What should we do?”

- ❖ “I have heard of interventions for drug and alcohol users, is there something like this for eating disorders?”

❖ “My daughter has an eating disorder, will she have it forever?”

❖ “I don’t think my son is telling his therapist the truth, how should I handle this?”

❖ “I’m overweight and want to start a weight loss program. Should I hide this from my daughter?”

❖ “Should I buy special food for my loved one?”

❖ “How long will eating disorder treatment take?”

❖ “What should I and/or my child read about eating disorders?”

Thank you!

❖ Questions?