



# Eating Disorders: What Every Parent Needs to Know

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# Goals

- Understand body image issues, eating concerns and social pressures facing teens.
- Identify types of eating disorders and who is most vulnerable.
- Know the warning signs of disordered eating and how to intervene.



# What Are Eating Disorders?

- Severe distortions in thinking and behaviors related to weight, size, and shape
- Life-threatening illnesses
- Anorexia, Bulimia, Eating Disorder, NOS

# Anorexia Nervosa

- Refusal to maintain a weight that is necessary for physical health and growth
- Severe dieting, excessive exercise, may engage in bingeing/purging behaviors
- Distorted view of their body size and shape



# Bulimia Nervosa

- Binge eating and purging behavior (vomiting, laxatives, excessive exercise)
- Self worth and self esteem is based predominately on size and shape
- Often normal weight





# What Causes an Eating Disorder?

- Unknown, Multiple Factors
- Genetics
  - Accounts for more than 50% of risk.
  - 3-5 X more common in families with a relative with an eating disorder
- Developmental Changes
- Family Process Problems
- The Thin Ideal

# The Thin Ideal



## **barefoot forward**

This new dance is a cross between the funky clicker and the mashed potato. ... I call it the funky potato!

Stepless dress,  
Charlotte Russe, \$411,  
877-200-WEAR.  
Newsboy cap, Nine  
West Hats, \$30, at  
Dillard's. Sheer fringed  
scarf, Rodi Style,  
\$9, at D&B Shops,  
dabshops.com.  
Heart charm necklace,  
Fada NYC, \$24, e-mail  
info@fadanyc.com.

Fashion director:  
Jacqueline Azria-Palumbo  
Hair: Kacmar at Art House  
Makeup: Claire Bailey at Art House

# Weight Focused Society

- 50% of 12-14 year old females say they are unhappy because they feel fat.
- 40-60% of high school girls are dieting on any given day.




# Weight Focused Society

- 42% of 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> graders report wanting to be thinner.
- 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat.



**WE OFFER SPECIALIZED  
SERVICES FOR CHILDREN  
AGES 3 - 12 WHO HAVE  
EATING DISORDERS.**



# How Serious Are Eating Disorders?

- Medically

- Cardiac, Skeletal, Endocrine

- Socially

- Withdrawn, decreased marital rates, missed school, college withdraw

- Psychologically

- Depression, Anxiety, OCD



# Preventing Eating Disorders

- Examine your own beliefs and attitudes towards weight.
- Praise and encourage your child based upon abilities and skills
- Discuss the media influence
- Discourage your adolescent from dieting
- Do not ignore warning signs



# Warning Signs

- **Dieting Behavior**
  - Increased picky eating
  - Dieting Books
- Evidence of visiting pro-ana or eating disorder websites.
- Missing Food
- Increase exercise with weight loss



# “Act Now” Warning Signs

- Fasting and skipping meals regularly
- Any purging
- Any bingeing behavior
- Loss of 2 menstrual cycles
- Use of diet pills or laxative use
- Excessive weight loss



# How to talk to your child

- Set aside a time to talk with your child to discuss your concerns.
- Discuss your concerns honestly and openly with your child. Provide examples of her/his behavior that concern you.
- If your child denies there is a problem, don't get into a battle with them.
- Don't place blame or provide simple explanations to the eating issue.
- Encourage them to seek professional help.



# How to help a child with eating disorder concerns

- Visit your pediatrician/physician and discuss concerns and observations
- Get a physical examination of your child to be certain they are medically stable
- Ask for a referral to an eating disorder specialist
- Interview specialist about treatment experience and approach.



# Is recovery possible?

- Recovery does occur
- The earlier the intervention the better the treatment response and prognosis
- Almost all recovery occurs within the first five years after onset

# Common traps parents face

- Disbelief of a problem
  - “It’s a phase”
- Believing child needs to “be ready” for treatment to be beneficial
- Giving the adolescent “one more try”
- Pediatrician/physician not informed about eating disorders
- Not knowing where to go for help



# In Summary...

- Eating disorders and disordered eating are serious illnesses that occur in adolescents
- Early intervention is the key for successful outcome
- Recovery is possible



# Helpful Resources

- National Eating Disorder Association
- Something Fishy Website
- “Help Your Teenager Beat An Eating Disorder” by James Lock & Daniel Le Grange
- “Your Dieting Daughter” by Carolyn Costin



Questions?



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