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**Eating Disorders**

An eating disorder is an illness that causes serious disturbances to your everyday diet, such as eating extremely small amounts of food or severely overeating. A person with an eating disorder may have started out just eating smaller or larger amounts of food, but at some point, the urge to eat less or more spiraled out of control. Eating disorders affect both genders, although rates among women and girls are two in a half times greater than among men and boys. Eating disorders frequently appear during the teen years or young adulthood but also may develop during childhood or later in life. Eating disorders are real, treatable medical illnesses. They frequently exist with other illnesses such as depression, substance abuse, or anxiety disorders.

Severe distress or concern about body weight or shape, or extreme efforts to manage weight or food intake, also may characterize an eating disorder. What are the different types of eating disorders? Well here are the types of eating disorders: anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder. All these eating disorders affect a person in several different ways and consequences. Also, these three eating disorders may develop medical complications as well. In the next couple paragraphs it will be describing the description of each disorder, their symptoms, and their medical complications.

People with anorexia nervosa see themselves as overweight, even when they’re obviously underweight. People with anorexia nervosa typically weigh themselves repeatedly, portion food carefully, and eat very small quantities of only certain foods. Some people with anorexia nervosa also may engage in binge eating followed by extreme dieting, excessive exercise, self-induced vomiting, or diuretics, or enemas. For example, a girl who is self-conscious about her body will hardly eat food and exercise their hearts out. There are many symptoms of anorexia nervosa but here are a couple of them: severe food restriction, extremely low body weight, relentless pursuit of thinness and unwillingness to maintain a normal or healthy weight, intense fear of gaining weight, lack of menstruation among girls and women, and distorted body image and self-esteem that is heavily influenced by perceptions of body weight and shape, or a denial of the seriousness of low body weight. In dealing with anorexia there’s also medical complications with this disorder. Some medical complications include: brittle hair and nails, muscle wasting, severe constipation, low blood pressure, brain damage, lethargy, infertility in women and men, and thinning of bones. Now we will be discussing the second disorder; bulimia nervosa.

People with bulimia nervosa have recurrent and frequent episodes of eating unusually large amounts of food and feeling a lack of control over these episodes. This binge-eating is followed by behavior that compensates for the overeating such as forced vomiting, excessive use of laxatives or diuretics, fasting, excessive exercise, or a combination of these behaviors. Bulimic behavior is done secretly because it is often accompanied by feelings of disgust or shame. The binge-eating and purging cycle happens anywhere from several times a week to many times a day. People with bulimia have symptoms like; inflamed sore throat, swollen salivary glands in the neck and jaw area, severe dehydration, acid reflux disorder, and electrolyte imbalance. For example, a girl who constantly over eats and exercises excessively. Now the last eating disorder; binge-eating will be discussed in the next couple of paragraphs.

With binge-eating disorder a person loses control over his or her eating. Unlike bulimia nervosa, periods of binge-eating are not followed by purging, excessive exercise, or fasting. As a result, people with binge-eating disorder often are over-weight or obese. People with binge-eating disorder who are obese are at higher risk for developing cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure. They also experience guilt, shame, and distress about their binge-eating, which can lead to more binge-eating. For example, a teenager will experience frequent episodes of out of control eating. Binge-eating could cost a person mental and physical damage.

Do you ever think who does suffer from eating disorders? According, to the national institute of mental health studies show that it primarily affects women. Binge eating disorder strikes males and females about equally. People sometimes have eating disorders without their families or friends ever suspecting that they have a problem. Aware that their behavior is abnormal, people with eating disorders may withdraw from social contact, hide their behavior, and deny that their eating patterns are problematic.

What causes eating disorders? Many people with eating disorders suffer from low self-esteem, feelings of helplessness, and intense dissatisfaction with the way they look. Negative emotions or traumas such as rape, abuse, or the death of a loved one can also trigger disorders. Even a happy event, such as giving birth, can lead to disorders because of the stressful impact of the event on an individual's new role and body image. Genetics play a large role, but genetic vulnerability is only part of the story. Environment plays a role too, especially in triggering onset, which often occurs in adolescence. Pressure to diet or weight loss related to a medical condition can be the gateway to anorexia nervosa or bulimia.

Researchers have found that eating disorders are biologically based illnesses and not lifestyle choices (Angela Guarda, M.D.). People with first-degree relatives: siblings or parents with an eating disorder may be more likely to develop an eating disorder, too. Also, peer pressure and what people see in the media may fuel this desire to be thin. Certain situations and events might increase the risk of developing an eating disorder. These risk factors may include: being female, age, family history, mental health disorders, stress, dieting, and work. Qualified therapists, such as licensed psychologists with experience in this area, can help those who suffer from eating disorders regain control of their eating behaviors and their lives.

Incorporating family or marital therapy into patient care may help prevent relapses by resolving interpersonal issues related to the eating disorder. Therapists can guide family members in understanding the patient's disorder and learning new techniques for coping with problems. Support groups can also help. Research has found that individuals with anorexia have a mortality rate eighteen times higher than peers who don't have eating disorders. Statistics show that up to thirty million people of all ages and genders suffer from an eating disorder (anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder) in the U.S. 25% of American men and 45% of American women are on a diet on any given day statistics show.

Students also create eating disorders within their lifespan. Statistics show 91% of women surveyed on a college campus had attempted to control their weight through dieting. 22% dieted “often” or “always.” In a survey of 185 female students on a college campus, 58% felt pressure to be a certain weight, and of the 83% that dieted for weight loss, 44% were of normal weight. Men also have eating disorders. Statistics prove that an estimated 10-15% of people with anorexia or bulimia are male. Among gay men, nearly 14% appeared to suffer from bulimia and over 20% appeared to be anorexic. They are many different statistics on both males, females, students and teens. It all varies what age you are and how much it affects you.

The reason why I chose this topic is because I use to eat very little and then exercise way too much. I use to control my eating by eating very little which was not healthy at all but now I eat regularly and exercise every day. The challenges in writing this paper to me was understanding how people could put themselves through these disorders that could potentially kill them in the end. It was difficult to understand how people with eating disorders have all these consequences that their giving their bodies and yet won’t know how to properly eat. While writing this paper I overcame that eating disorders could happen by genetics, family, stress, peer pressure, and by society.

While writing this paper I’ve overcame that eating disorders are very dangerous towards yourself, your mind, health, and to the people around you. My personal experience with eating disorders happened when I was judged by people, peers, and family about my weight. Their judgments’ made me decide to be bulimic one day. In my experience I would eat a large lunch then not eat dinner and exercise for two hours. I now recognize that it was a bad choice because I was only hurting myself and my body. Now, I don’t have any eating problems. I eat healthy, exercise regularly, and cut out junk food. My experience impacted me to learn how to love myself the right way and nourish my body with respect, healthy eating, and exercise. Every day I make sure that I boost my own confidence and give compliments to others in my life because they’re just as important as me.

As I’m reflecting on this topic I want to add that eating disorders are something that will destroy you until you learn to make a change and realize how important your body is. Currently, a personal change I’m working on is exercising every day and not skipping a day without giving my body a workout. Secondly, I’m working on becoming emotional stable with myself. Hopefully I don’t quit on making a change for myself when my heart desires change. Eating disorders are not something to be ignored! People need to take into consideration their judgments, what society portrays as a false ideal, and how you make a person feel from what you say about them.

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