

**October 25,  
2017**

# **Eating Disorders:** Prevention and Early Intervention

A presentation to  
**Lord Byng PAC**

# Potential Warning Signs

- Overly self-critical
- *“Do I look okay?”*
- Frequent mirror-checking
- Signs of depression, irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Excessive exercising
- Use of steroids or overuse of health supplements
- Significant weight fluctuations
- Preoccupation with muscle tone, fitness
- Efforts to cover up one’s body (baggy clothes, hoods, etc.)

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# Potential Warning Signs

- Signs of binge eating or hoarding food
- Evidence of laxative or diuretics use
- Leaving the table immediately after meals
- Creating a complex life style, schedule or rituals to avoid eating, or to make time for binge-purge episodes
- Indications that weight loss, dieting, and control of food are primary concerns

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# Treatment Options

- Residential or hospital treatment
- Psychiatric counseling
- Meal support & nutritional guidance
- Individual, group, & family therapy
- Expressive & recreational therapy (arts, gardening, etc.)
- Pharmacology
- Community support



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- Rather, ED behaviours become a source of shame and guilt, leading to even greater disconnect and feelings of being misunderstood – and the cycle repeats itself
- **This makes coming forward for help DIFFICULT!**

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# EDs Are About Pain

- Eating disorders are often about the avoidance of dealing with difficult emotions, or trauma
- ED sufferers are *suffering*



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# What Causes an ED?

- Eating disorders are *multifactorial*. This means that there is no one, single thing that causes every eating disorder – rather, there are a number of different factors and triggers that contribute to an eating disorder's onset
- Remember: each eating disorder sufferer is a unique person, with a unique lived experience
- The following lists are not complete or exclusive – there

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# Individual Factors

- Fear of natural body changes, or of growing up
- Difficulty functioning independently
- Drive for perfection & high self-control; competitive
- Low self-esteem or poor body image
- Overvaluation of appearance
- Identity problems
- History of trauma



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# Societal Factors

- “Culture of shame” that promotes a thin ideal, while stigmatizing other body shapes or natural aging  
*e.g.: Fat-phobia, fat-shaming, anti-aging, etc.*
- Social media: filters, comments, beauty focus...
- Fetishization of eating disorders/thinness in media
- Fashion, media, and diet industries

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# Peer Factors

- Isolation, lack of support
- Unhealthy or controlling relationships
- Body-focused comments: teasing, bullying, body-shaming, negative self-talk, criticizing others
- Specific external peer pressures to control weight (e.g., prom, ballet, sports, impress a crush, etc.)



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# Family Factors

- Family history of mental illness (e.g. OCD, depression, ED, anxiety)
- High parental expectations (real or perceived)
- Maladaptive family attitudes to eating and weight
- Upsetting mealtime experiences (arguments, disliking foods, etc.)
- Difficulty with communication

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# When the Factors Combine

- Social anxiety, or peer pressure to be “perfect”
- Struggling with unmet emotional needs
- Experiencing a “disconnect” within family or friends
- Feeling overwhelmed by too much change or too many demands of daily life
- Choosing to isolate and withdraw makes treatment and recovery challenging

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# A Factor is Not a Cause

Let's be clear: Friends, parents, and caregivers usually DO NOT directly cause eating disorders.

In fact, friends, parents, and caregivers can be the best resources for recovery – with the right skills, mindset, and approach to conversation and support.



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# Our Philosophy

Recovery is something we give ourselves in the company of people who genuinely care.

At the Looking Glass Foundation,  
**we care *deeply*.**

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# Caring is Intervening

- Family, friends, teachers, coaches, administrators, counsellors, etc., CAN help those who are suffering from, or are at risk of developing, an eating disorder
- We can intervene in appropriate, respectful, and meaningful ways

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# Caring is Not Judging

- It is not our place to judge another person, nor is it helpful
- Passing judgment (however subtly) pushes someone away – it doesn't bring them toward us
- This is especially true for someone who might be suffering from, or at risk of developing, an eating disorder

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# Why We Intervene

- We DON'T intervene to “fix” the problem
- We DO intervene to:
  - Indicate the true strength of our relationship
  - Show that they can rely on us for truth & support
  - Encourage them to move forward



# The Initial Approach

- Set a time to talk privately, in a comfortable setting
- Express your concerns clearly
- Invite dialogue to explore these concerns
- Avoid placing shame, blame, or guilt
- Resist conflict, or a “battle of the wills”
- Avoid giving simple solutions
- Express your continued and unconditional support

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# Start the Conversation

- It can be as simple as:

*"Come sit with me...  
Can I make you a cup of tea? "*

# Speak the unspoken

- Be prepared to “speak the unspoken” - the truth that you both know, but that neither of you want to say out loud. Call it by its name – an *eating disorder*
- Avoid “tip-toeing” around the issue in fear of setting them off – they will register your discomfort as a reason to remain withdrawn
- Express your own emotions (without adding guilt or shame) to demonstrate that opening up is OKAY

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# Be Prepared for Emotion

- Attend to the emotion
- Name it – put it in words
- Validate the emotion
- Meet the emotional need
- Resist going to the “bright side”



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# Attend to the Emotion

- Calmly observe and acknowledge what the other person seems to be feeling – whether or not they're openly expressing it:

*"I can see that you're upset."*

# Name it - Put it into Words

- Put into words the emotion (or range of emotions) that you think the other person might be experiencing.
- Help them to identify and describe what emotions they are feeling:

*“Are you sad right now?”*



# Validate the Emotion

- Put yourself in their shoes and convey understanding of what **they** are experiencing
- Imagine what the situation must be like for **them** – don't make it about you
- Accept, allow, and validate their emotions – no matter how unexpected, or how hard they are for you to understand:

*“It's okay to feel what you feel.”*

# Meet the Emotional Need

- If someone is SAD, comfort them
- If someone is ANGRY, help them define what it is they're angry about
- If someone is AFRAID, give them assurance
- If someone is ANXIOUS, help them sort out the source of their anxiety

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# Resist Going to the “Bright Side”

- Don't gloss over, downplay, or put a “positive spin” on the situation
- It is what it is. Try to meet the person where they are
- If you can accept and deal with it, maybe they will trust themselves to do so as well



# Curve Ball Conversations

- Conversations can sometimes go sideways, despite our very best intentions!
- Regroup by “circling back” and re-phrasing what was said before the conversation got off track
- Remain calm and earnest in your desire to get to a good place

# Manage Tricky Situations

- Meals – especially at restaurants and buffets
- After meals – get occupied with something
- Exercise – gyms, classes, sports (set boundaries)
- Holidays – especially winter holidays
- Being “on” in front of others (attention)
- Competitive situations (pressure)

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# Avoid Tricky Conversations

Recognize that all of these can be sensitive subjects:

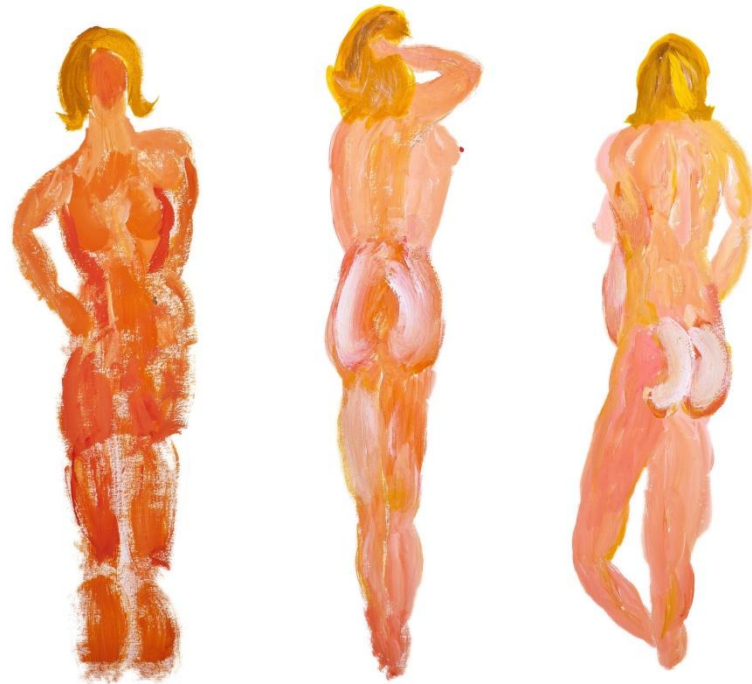
- Weight, body image, weight loss
- Diet, supplements, nutrition
- Exercise, body tone, fitness
- Being “perfect”
- High achievement, proving one’s worth
- Criticism of self and others

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# Model Healthy Talk

- The way we talk about bodies has a huge impact on our own, and others', perceptions



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- **When we constantly criticize ourselves, our colleagues, our families, or the people we see on film & social media, we create a negative and destructive neural pathway where anything less than perfection is failure**

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# Model Healthy Talk

- The way we talk about bodies has a huge impact on our own, and others', perceptions
- When we constantly criticize ourselves, our colleagues, our families, or the people we see on film & social media, we create a negative and destructive neural pathway where anything less than perfection is failure
- **Practice compassion, respect, and inclusivity in your own thoughts and conversations!**

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We Are All...

Perfectly

*imperfect*

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# Be Perfectly Imperfect

- Humility, compassion, vulnerability, and humour connect us all as complex human beings

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- **If others see that we can laugh at our mistakes and accept imperfection in ourselves, they will be more likely to engage in self-compassion when faced with their own imperfections**



# Be Perfectly Imperfect

- Humility, compassion, vulnerability, and humour connect us all as complex human beings
- If others see that we can laugh at our mistakes and accept imperfection in ourselves, they will be more likely to engage in self-compassion when faced with their own imperfections

So ***love yourself*** already

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# The Looking Glass Foundation

- People suffering from eating disorders need a caring community of support to rely on – from the earliest intervention, to paths of recovery, to ongoing relapse prevention
- This is the community and the programming the Looking Glass Foundation is building!

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# The Looking Glass Foundation

- Residential Care at the Looking Glass Residence (*MSP*)
- Hand-in-Hand 1:1 Match Support (*free*)
- Individualized Support Service (*free*)
- Online Peer Support (*free*)
- Summer Camp (\$200\*)
- Scholarships (*free*)
- Blogs, Social Media, and Events (*free*)
- Outreach and Recovery Networking (*varies*)

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# Resources

- o **[www.lookingglassbc.com](http://www.lookingglassbc.com)**

LGF mission, support programs, event registration, Blog, volunteering, online donations

- o **[www.keltymentalhealth.ca](http://www.keltymentalhealth.ca)**

Info and resources for parents, teachers, counsellors, youth, families... about ALL mental health, not just ED

- o **[www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca)**

National Eating Disorder Info Centre. Stats, facts, research, campaigns, resources

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# Suggested Reading

- o **Life Without ED**

by Jenni Schaefer

- o **Goodbye ED, Hello Me**

by Jenni Schaefer

- o **Drawing from Within**

by Lisa D. Hinz

- o **Brave Girl Eating**

by Harriet Brown

- o **Intuitive Eating**

by Evelyn Tribole & Elyse Resch

- o **The Food & Feelings Workbook**

by Karen R. Koenig

- o **Mothers, Daughters, and Body Image**

by Hillary McBride

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# Join Us On Social



**Twitter:** @Looking\_GlassBC



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Eating



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