



Understanding Mental Illness

Understanding Eating Disorders

Webinars presented by the National Council for
Community Behavioral Healthcare

Program content based upon Mental Health First Aid USA



Bryan V. Gibb

Director of Public Education, National
Council for Community Behavioral
Healthcare



Overview

- + Understanding Eating Disorders
 - Types of Eating Disorders
 - Signs & Symptoms
 - Risk factors

- + Mental Health First Aid Action Plan
 - *Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm*
 - *Eating Disorder Symptoms*



What Is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental Health First Aid is the help offered to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves.



Why Mental Health First Aid?

- + Mental health problems are common.
- + Stigma is associated with mental health problems.
- + Many people are not well informed about mental health problems.
- + Professional help is not always on hand.
- + People often do not know how to respond.
- + People with mental health problems often do not seek help.



The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan

- + **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm
- + **L**isten nonjudgmentally
- + **G**ive reassurance and information
- + **E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- + **E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies



What Is a Mental Disorder?

A **mental disorder** or **mental illness** is a diagnosable illness that:

- + Affects a person's thinking, emotional state, and behavior
- + Disrupts the person's ability to
 - Work
 - Carry out daily activities
 - Engage in satisfying relationships



U.S. Adults with a Mental Disorder in Any One Year

| Type of Mental Disorder | % Adults |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Anxiety disorder | 18.1 |
| Major depressive disorder | 6.7 |
| Substance use disorder | 3.8 |
| Bipolar disorder | 2.6 |
| Eating disorders | 2.1 |
| Schizophrenia | 1.1 |
| Any mental disorder | 26.2 |



Recovery from Mental Illness

“Recovery is the process in which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.”

“For some, this is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite a disability.”

“For others, recovery implies the reduction or complete remission of symptoms.”

— *President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003*



The Growth of Mental Health First Aid since 2008

- + 1,000 Certified Instructors**
- + 43 States**
- + More than 15,000 first-aiders certified**



Trish Jones-Bendel, RN

Mental Health First Aid Instructor
Director of Specialty Services
Linden Oaks at Edward
Naperville, Illinois



What Are Eating Disorders?

- + Involve overevaluation of body shape and weight.
- + Are about more than food.
- + Involve disturbance of eating habits or weight control behavior.
- + Result in impairments of physical health, psychological, and social functioning.
- + Frequently co-occur with depression and anxiety disorders
- + Affect men and women of all ages
- + Can result in weight gain or weight loss



Warning Signs

Behavioral

- + Binge eating
- + Avoiding meals with others
- + Evidence of vomiting or laxative use
- + Excessive, obsessive, or ritualistic exercise pattern
- + Changes in food patterns
- + Extreme analysis of foods and food labels
- + Rigid patterns around food selection, preparation and eating



Warning Signs

Behavioral

- + Avoiding questions or lying about food
- + Behaviors focused on food
- + Behaviors focused on body weight and shape
- + Social avoidance of previously enjoyed activities

Warning Signs

Physical

- + Weight loss or weight fluctuations
- + Sensitivity to cold or feeling cold most of the time
- + Changes in or loss of menstrual periods
- + Swelling around the cheeks or jaw
- + Calluses on knuckles
- + Dental deterioration from vomiting
- + Fainting



Warning Signs

Psychological

- + Preoccupation with food, body shape, and weight
- + Extreme body dissatisfaction
- + Distorted body image
- + Sensitivity to comments or criticism about exercise, food, body shape, or weight
- + Heightened anxiety around meals
- + Depression, anxiety or irritability
- + Low self esteem
- + Rigid thinking

Main Characteristics of Eating Disorders

Anorexia Nervosa

- + Maintaining a very low body weight
- + Intense fear of gaining weight
- + Drive for thinness
- + Loss of at least three consecutive menstrual
- + Severe disturbance in body image

Bulimia Nervosa

- + Repeated episodes of uncontrolled overeating combined with purging behaviors



Main Characteristics of Eating Disorders

Binge-Eating Disorder

- + Repeated episodes of uncontrolled overeating
- + No compensatory behavior for overeating
- + Significant distress regarding overeating
- + Occurs at least twice a week over a period of six months or more



Lisa Porter, MFT, RDT.

Mental Health First Aid National Trainer
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and
Registered Drama Therapist
San Diego, California

Risk Factors for Eating Disorders

Life Experiences

- + Conflict in the home, high expectations, low contact
- + Sexual abuse
- + Family dieting
- + Critical comments from others about eating, weight, or body shape
- + Pressure to be slim because of occupation or activity (e.g., model, jockey, gymnast)

Risk Factors for Eating Disorders

Personal Characteristics

- + Low self-esteem
- + Perfectionism
- + Anxiety or depression
- + Obesity (increases risk for bulimia nervosa)
- + Early start of menstrual periods (increases risk for bulimia nervosa)

Mental Disorders in Family Members

- + Family members with an eating disorder
- + Family members with other mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or alcohol or drug misuse



Mental Health First Aid Action Plan

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Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm

- + Is the person at risk of harm to self or others?
- + Suicide - MHFA for suicidal thoughts and behaviors
- + Harm to self - MHFA for nonsuicidal self injury
- + Serious health consequences - call for emergency help



Physical Health Crisis

- + Eating disorders can pose serious health risks, including heart failure and death.
- + Long-term physical health problems can include
 - Slowing of growth and puberty
 - Loss of tooth enamel
 - Brain changes that can lead to cognitive problems
 - Loss of bone density



Physical Health Crisis

- + Disordered thinking - not making sense
- + Disorientation
- + Repeated vomiting throughout the day
- + Fainting spells
- + Too weak to walk (or collapsing)
- + Painful muscle spasms
- + Chest pain or trouble breathing
- + Blood in vomit, urine, or bowel movement
- + Body Mass Index is less than 16
- + Irregular or slow heartbeat
- + Cold, clammy skin indicating low body temperature or a temperature less than 95 degrees Fahrenheit



Listen Nonjudgmentally

- + Listen to the person's concerns
- + You may find it difficult to listen to what the person has to say
- + Remember to view the person's behavior as illness related rather than self-indulgent or willful
- + Stay calm



Give Reassurance and Information

- + Offer consistent emotional support and understanding
- + Give hope for recovery
- + Offer information
- + Support the person who reacts negatively



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Encourage Appropriate Professional Help



- + People who have an eating disorder, particularly anorexia, may not want to change
- + Unless the person is ready for change, it is unlikely that any treatment will work.

Encourage Appropriate Professional Help



- + Types of Professionals
 - Physicans
 - Psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and other mental health professionals
 - Nutrition counselors

- + Types of Professional Help
 - Medical assistance
 - Anorexia nervosa: family therapy
 - Bulimia nervosa: cognitive behavioral therapy
 - Binge eating: cognitive behavioral therapy
 - Medications such as antidepressants

Encourage Self-Help and Other Support Strategies



- + Support groups (facilitated)
- + Family, friends, and faith networks
- + Self-help books based on cognitive behavioral therapy



Questions on Eating Disorders

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Mental Health First Aid in your Community



- + A recording of this webinar & the power point will be available on the National Council website 48 hours after it has ended.
- + Visit www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org for further information on the course and to find an instructor near you.
- + Become a fan of Mental Health First Aid USA on Facebook & get updates and information on a variety of mental health topics.
- + For any further questions, contact Bryan Gibb at bryang@thenationalcouncil.org or Susan Partain at susanp@thenationalcouncil.org or 202.684.3732.