

DO I HAVE AN EATING DISORDER?

Evaluating Eating and Exercise Habits

Living in our culture, it's not surprising if you feel you have to look a certain way to be happy or even healthy. However, the things you are doing to be thin can quickly spin out of control and become a serious life-threatening eating disorder.

- Do you spend time wishing parts of your body looked different?
- Are you unhappy with your reflection in the mirror?
- Do you skip meals?
- Do you count the calories or fat grams in anything you eat?
- Do you exercise so much that you are fatigued or have frequent injuries?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, keep reading...

What is Disordered Eating?

Disordered eating is when a person's attitudes about food, weight, and body size lead to very rigid eating and exercise habits that jeopardize one's health, happiness, and safety. Disordered eating may begin as a way to lose a few pounds or get in shape, but these behaviors can quickly get out of control, become obsessions, and may even turn into an eating disorder.

Even if you don't have a full-blown eating disorder, you may be missing out on living while you spend all your time dieting!

Just because you weigh yourself, skip meals, count calories, or over-exercise doesn't necessarily mean that you have an eating disorder. But you may be dealing with what's called "disordered eating."

Wonder if you're dealing with disordered eating?

Think about this...

- Do you avoid eating meals or snacks when you're around other people?
- Do you constantly calculate numbers of fat grams and calories?
- Do you weigh yourself often and find yourself obsessed with the number on the scale?
- Do you exercise because you feel like you have to, not because you want to?
- Are you afraid of gaining weight?
- Do you ever feel out of control when you are eating?
- Do your eating patterns include extreme dieting, preferences for certain foods, withdrawn or ritualized behavior at mealtime, or secretive bingeing?
- Has weight loss, dieting, and/or control of food become one of your major concerns?
- Do you feel ashamed, disgusted, or guilty after eating?
- Do you worry about the weight, shape, or size of your body?
- Do you feel like your identity and value is based on how you look or how much you weigh?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you could be dealing with disordered eating. It is likely that these attitudes and behaviors are taking a toll on your mental and physical well being. It is important that you start to talk about your eating habits and concerns now, rather than waiting until your situation gets more serious than you can handle.

What Do I Do Now?

Talk about it! Tell a friend, teacher, parent, coach, youth group leader, doctor, counselor, or nutritionist what you`re going through. If that seems too scary or too difficult, you may want to check out the National Eating Disorders Association`s *Sharing with EEEase* handout posted on this website. It will help you plan what to say the first time you talk to someone about your eating and exercise habits. It is important to get some support to change the thoughts and behaviors you are experiencing now. It could save your life - and isn`t your health and happiness worth it?

Source: National Eating Disorders Association www.nationaleatingdisorders.org