



Causes

Recovery Kit

Anorexia Nervosa

Binge Eating Disorder

Bulimia Nervosa

Negative Body Image

*Guidelines For Talking
About Your Eating Disorder*

The Dangers of Dieting

*Treatment For An
Eating Disorder*

*What Causes An Eating
Disorder*



What Causes An Eating Disorder?

- ◆ Eating disorders are not about food and weight.
- ◆ Eating disorders are attempts to use food and weight as a way of dealing or avoiding emotional difficulties that can not be seen by the outside observer.
 - » The observable signs, such as binge eating and/or restricting are symptoms of the illness.
- ◆ The causes of eating disorders are unique for each person.
- ◆ The causes are usually complex, with several factors occurring. An eating disorder is not something one person can “cause” or “give” to someone else.
- ◆ Think of the eating disorder as a stool- there are several “legs” or supporting factors that contribute to the eating disorder.

Contributing Factors To The Development Of An Eating Disorder

- ◆ Genetics
 - » Temperament: The tendency to respond or cope in a certain way (being obsessive, anxious, sensitive, avoidant) may make people more vulnerable. These things may be partially determined by genetics.
 - » Eating disorders often run in families suggesting a genetic component.
 - » In some people with eating disorders, chemicals in the brain that regulate hunger, satiety and appetite have been found to be unbalanced.
- ◆ Psychological factors
 - » Perfectionistic tendencies: Seeing things only in black and white. Having high expectations for self, (eg “Being the thinnest is the best.” Or “I have to be good.”)



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» Developmental concerns: An eating disorder may be a way of delaying one's maturation or avoiding concerns about what growing up means. It may also be a way of developing an identity, rather than focus on internal aspects of self "thinness" can become a way of defining who one is.

» Avoiding feelings: Preoccupation with food and weight, planning meals or binges takes a lot of energy and leaves little time to look at feelings. An eating disorder can be a way of preventing oneself from feeling painful emotions, avoiding the fear of being overwhelmed by emotions, or indirectly expressing feelings.

◆ Relationship problems

- » Controlling relationships
- » Loneliness
- » History of being teased or criticized for appearance

◆ Societal factors

- » Consistent exposure to unrealistic standards of beauty. Culturally promoted belief that thinness equals happiness and success.
- » Socially accepted myths about food, weight, and dieting.
- » Undue emphasis on appearance and narrow definitions of beauty.