

DO I HAVE AN EATING DISORDER?

There are broadly speaking three categories of eating disorder. Anorexia nervosa, Bulimia nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder.

What we have to bear in mind is that an eating disorder is not an illness like measles. It is not something that you either HAVE OR DON'T HAVE. Most women and many men are concerned with what they eat and how they look, and many do strange things to control their weight.

You also have to remember that persons with eating disorders do not necessarily fit neatly into the three main categories of eating disorder., named above.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF EATING PROBLEMS

Whether or not you have an eating disorder depends upon how you are functioning along three significant dimensions.

THOUGHTS

The first is what you are **THINKING** about food, eating, your weight and your body. Are these thoughts negative and persistent. For example, do you think that if other people knew what you put into your mouth, or what you did to control the calories you are absorbing, that you would be ashamed. Can't you stop thinking about what you have eaten or what you are going to eat, or what you should be eating if you had enough willpower.

FEELINGS

The second is, how are you **FEELING** about food, weight, eating and your own body. Is there a lot of guilt, anxiety and fear. Do you feel fat even though your friends say you are okay. Do you hate yourself for what you put in your mouth. Are you scared of eating normally. Do you sometimes feel out of control - as if someone has possessed your mind and is doing everything you would rather not do. Do you feel helpless around food....and so on. How strong are these feelings.

BEHAVIOUR

The third dimension is how your thoughts and feelings lead you to **BEHAVE** around food and weight control.

For example is there anything you do in secret, like throw up your evening meal, or overeat. Do you avoid wearing certain clothes because of how you feel about your body, or refuse social invitations. Do you constantly jump on the scales. Are you always on or off a diet.....

Where behaviour is concerned, many people lose sight of what is normal. They are so used to doing the things they don't remember what it was like to be different and enjoying a relaxed relationship with food. For this reason many people who **behave** dangerously with food are in denial about how serious their problems are.



WHAT KIND OF DISORDER DO I HAVE

Do you do any three of the following?

- Overeat in secret, either all or some of the time.
 - Feel that your eating isn't normal
 - Feel guilty about what you have eaten and feel like a bad person.
 - Are constantly trying to lose weight or prevent yourself from gaining weight and ultimately failing.
 - Think and anguish about food all the time
- Feel out of control around certain kinds of food or any food.

You are probably suffering from A **COMPULSIVE EATING PROBLEM**

If in addition to the above you are normal or slightly overweight and you purge to get rid of unwanted calories whether you have binged or not, you are probably suffering from **BULIMIA**

If you are the following;

- normal weight or underweight and
- feel fat, or terrified of weight gain
- are very fearful of eating
- vomit or take laxatives after normal meals, snacks or binges

You are probably suffering from a form of **ANOREXIA - BULIMIC SUBTYPE**