



A WAR against myself

BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE TOPIC OF FOOD CONSUMPTION AND THE EMOTIONAL FEAR OR GUILT FROM FUELING THE BODY

Eating disorders are nothing to joke about or take lightly. They are a war that can lead to death. An anonymous source, who has struggled with anorexia and bulimia for about three years, wants people to know it's not as simple as, 'I guess I'm not eating today.'

"I wish people knew what they were getting into. It seems like an easy battle to win, but it really drags you down and becomes an addiction. People often underestimate the effects of an ED. This can kill you and it's so romanticized and joked about; I wish people would learn about how this can ruin people's lives," the source said.

Like many teens, she started her battle in middle school. She based a lot of daily factors on her weight, including her self-worth.

"I felt that if I didn't remain as skinny as I was, people would think I'm getting less and less attractive. I based my self-worth on my weight. My happiness for the day was determined by the number on the scale that morning."

As she grew older and was out of middle school, she realized that what she was doing wasn't healthy and it was time for a change. Unfortunately, effects started to reflect on the outside and the inside. She lost hair, color in her face and had terrible headaches.

"Mentally, it has ruined me. I am so incredibly weight conscious and I still can't get rid of the habits I developed. The biggest change is probably my relationship

with my family. Now, I have no relationship with my parents whatsoever because I have kept this a secret for so long."

During the summer between seventh and eighth grade, things got more serious. It was the 'bikini season.' The source said she fought bulimia all summer long.

"I started to starve myself on days where I knew I would be in a swimsuit or a short shirt. I soon became obsessed with cutting down my calories, convincing myself it was to get healthier. There were days where I would eat nothing for over 24 hours if I had gone over my calorie count to balance it out," she said.

Things continued to get worse with the relationship of food and mindset.

"I went from starving myself to forcing myself to throw up. I had thrown up if I ate a meal that day or felt fat. For the next couple of months, I would throw up about once a week. I wouldn't eat anything at lunch and some people would notice. One day one of my friends said 'you never eat lunch. It's like you're anorexic or something,' and this made me feel excitement. I wanted people to notice me not eating as much and me getting thinner."

The following year, things started to improve. She started taking care of herself. She ate full dinners and hadn't thrown up for several months. Yet, she wasn't out of the woods. She still went through phases where she skipped meals purposefully or purges.

"It's been a war between me and my body. I don't know if it will ever end. Every time I think I'm getting over it, something triggers me and I have to start all over. Having an ED for so long has put a dent in my mental health. I've become depressed

and lost all self-worth, but I know that this isn't something permanent and I will eventually be able to get over it," she said.

Fortunately, her fight wasn't fatal, but it doesn't mean she won the war. The battle has yet to be won.

"I HAVE TO BE **SKINNY** TO BE **PRETTY**. Having a small number on the scale is **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**.

I NEED TO BURN ALL the calories I ate.

I SHOULDN'T EAT TODAY BECAUSE I ATE YESTERDAY. MY EATING DISORDER is my own personal

HELL.

THE INVISIBLE STRUGGLE ACCORDING TO MRS. ALICIA RIPPY

STUDENTS CAN RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF EATING DISORDERS, ACCORDING TO ONE SCHOOL COUNSELOR

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF EATING DISORDERS: "A drastic drop in weight or gain in weight, not wanting to eat around people, eating in secret, a major concern around the body appearance or their weight or obsession around certain food or counting calories."

EATING DISORDERS CANNOT ONLY CHANGE THE BODY, BUT THE MIND... "If it's left untreated, it can get worse overtime; the thought patterns begin to stick and it's hard to get rid of them. It can also lead to depression and anxiety."

WHAT CAN COUNSELORS DO TO HELP... "Providing short-term intervention instead of long-term therapeutic help. We refer them to an outside therapist that would have expertise in that area. We encourage them to make healthy decisions here and support their coping strategies and their overall goals."

YOU CAN HELP BY... "Being aware that it exists and recognizing some of the signs and symptoms of eating disorders and realize it isn't typical. It's important to have a trusted adult that you can go to, to help a friend. Know eating disorders happen."

EATING DISORDERS CAN STEM FROM...

"Trauma. It can be a trauma response. It's also a control issue; their life just feels chaotic and out of control. This a way for them to be in control of something in their life."

FOR MORE: visit [eating disorder foundation.org](http://eatingdisorderfoundation.org)

EATING DISORDER TERMS AND STATS

eat-ing dis-order- *noun*
any of a range of psychological disorders characterized by abnormal or disturbed eating habits

bo-dy dys-mor-phi-a- *noun*
a mental illness involving obsessive focus on a perceived flaw in appearance

an-o-rex-i-a- *noun*
an emotional disorder characterized by an obsessive desire to lose weight by refusing to eat

bu-lim-i-a- *noun*
an emotional disorder involving distortion of body image and an obsessive desire to lose weight, in which bouts of extreme overeating are followed by depression and self-induced vomiting, purging or fasting

1.4% OF TEENS (13-18) SUFFER FROM AN EATING DISORDER

90% OF TEENS WITH ANOREXIA ARE FEMALE

50% OF TEEN GIRLS AND **30%** OF TEEN BOYS USE HEALTHY WEIGHT CONTROL BEHAVIORS

50% OF TEENS WITH AN EATING DISORDER ALSO SUFFER FROM CLINICAL DEPRESSION

FIND MORE INFORMATION ON: polaristeen.com

“An eating disorder ISN'T a 'skinny girl refusing a cupcake.' it's **LOSING HAIR**, getting dizzy **EVERY TIME** you stand up, sleeping **WAY TOO MUCH**, AND IT LEADS TO MORE MENTAL **HEALTH PROBLEMS SUCH AS: ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, AND SO MUCH MORE.** It is **SO ROMANTICIZED** in this generation when it's actually **SOMETHING HORRIBLE** that people **DIE FROM.**" *anonymous*