

EATING DISORDERS



About Eating Disorders

Disordered eating can take on a variety of forms, including restriction of food, obsession around eating or exercise, or consumption of food in large quantities. More extreme than a general concern about weight or occasional overeating, these behaviors are sustained over a specified period of time and cause impairments both psychologically and physically.

While eating disorders occur more frequently in females, males can also develop dysfunctional eating or exercise habits. The National Eating Disorders Association¹ notes that behaviors may look different between sexes, with males being more likely to place a greater emphasis on muscle gain and females tending to emphasize weight loss.

Eating disorders can have an impact on more than just a student's eating or exercise behavior. Psychologically, a student may also experience depression, social-anxiety, and OCD.² As students often attempt to hide disordered eating behaviors, it is important to note other changes in a student's behavior or mood. School staff may be helpful in identifying patterns of behavior that are concerning, including those that require further observation or intervention.

What Does It Look Like?³

Anorexia Nervosa

- Restriction of food that leads to unhealthy weight loss
- Anxieties about weight gain
- Weight loss achieved through restricting or binge-eating/purging behaviors

Binge-Eating Disorder

- Consumption of large amounts of food in a relatively small period of time, sometimes to the point of feeling ill
- Feelings of embarrassment, guilt, or loss of control regarding eating habits

Bulimia Nervosa

- Large amounts of food are consumed, followed by activities such as extreme exercise, self-induced vomiting, laxative use, or restriction of food

MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS OF CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: EATING DISORDERS

Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder

- Diagnosis used when an individual exhibits symptoms of disordered eating but the criteria for a specific eating disorder are not fully met
- An individual's weight may still be considered in a normal range
- Purging occurs without binge eating

Symptoms and Interventions

	Symptoms	Interventions
Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates decreased focus • Often requests to use bathroom • Experiences exhaustion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote healthy body-image assignments and conversations • Permit breaks for rest
School Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strives for perfection • Hesitates to share or delegate control on projects • Exhibits lack of interest in completing work due to fear of failing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate acceptance of mistakes • Assign work in group projects to prevent excessive controlling • Reduce assignments if necessary • Encourage creativity or spontaneity in assignments
Desk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceals food • Complains of frequently feeling cold • Strives for controlled, orderly environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place student with or near understanding peers • Don't place too much emphasis on organization
Outside the Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricts food at lunch or during activities involving food • Attempts to hide eating behaviors (refusing to eat in front of others or eating in secret) • Experiences changes in social interactions or peer groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide student with a safe space for eating • Find an adult who can serve as trusted, safe contact for eating with • Communicate with parents or guardians so that they can follow up with medical or other professionals
Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggles with unexpected changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give student advanced notice of schedule changes

Student Strengths

- Focused
- Detail-oriented
- Thoughtful
- Intuitive

References

- ¹ National Eating Disorders Association. (2015). *Educator toolkit*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/sites/default/files/Toolkits/EducatorToolkit.pdf>; p. 7.
- ² Ibid., p. 8.
- ³ American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5)*. Washington, DC: Author.

Resources

- **National Institute of Mental Health**
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/eating-disorders>
- **Office of Women's Health**
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/body-image/eating-disorders>
- **National Eating Disorder Association**
<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>