

Did You Know?

❁ THE MOST PREVALENT EATING DISORDERS ARE, ANOREXIA, BINGE EATING DISORDER AND BULIMIA

❁ 1 IN 4 PEOPLE WITH EATING DISORDERS ARE MALE, EATING DISORDERS CAN AFFECT MEN AS JUST AS MUCH AS WOMEN

❁ EATING DISORDERS HAVE THE HIGHEST MORTALITY RATE OF ANY MENTAL ILLNESS

❁ ALMOST 50% OF PEOPLE WITH EATING DISORDERS FALL UNDER THE CRITERIA OF DEPRESSION

Photo/A.Solis



- THE VICIOUS CYCLE - - OF EATING DISORDERS -



Story/A.Solis

Emotions are complex and people have many ways to cope with them, using food to cope is a very common and unhealthy way of coping. To many, eating seems like such a mundane and simple task. Your body lets you know when it's time to eat, often using hunger pains and your growling stomach to alert you it's time to eat and so you do. For others it's not that simple, eating can seem like a task, something to dread. When you suffer with an eating disorder, your relationship with food is toxic and so is your relationship with your body. There are many things that can trigger an eating disorder from a distorted body image or using food as an escape from complicated feelings. A distorted body image, being surrounded by the constant diet culture in society, and the rude remarks people say about your body can manifest into something that can make you feel like your body isn't good enough. These problems can follow you throughout life, Natalia Rose Olives was only 13 when she started struggling with food and her body and it followed her throughout her adulthood nine years later.

"I fit the criteria for Anorexia. My day consisted of two eggs for breakfast and a coke for lunch, and maybe a few bites of dinner, which wasn't too hard to hide because my family rarely ate together since they were all so busy," Olives said.

There are several different types of eating disorders, but the most well-known one is Anorexia. It's where the person would knowingly starve themselves and restrain from eating. There's also Bulimia, it's where the person would throw up whatever food they've eaten in order to get rid of it. Or they even use laxatives to get rid of it. Binge eating disorder where the person would eat a large amount of food even when they're full. For those who don't fit the criteria of just one there's the title of Eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS) where the persons pattern of eating falls under more than one category. For example,

if someone shows symptoms of anorexia but also bulimia and they sometimes have periods where they binge eat, so identifying what eating disorder they have is less clear so EDNOS is the best fit for people in those circumstances.

Although eating disorders revolve around food, it also revolves around the body. People with eating disorders can also fall into the habit of obsessively exercising.

"I worked myself to the bone in the gym, especially since I was constantly on treadmills in the Cardio room," Olives said

"I worked myself to the bone,"

Over exercising while being malnourished can cause injuries, people tend to pass out or become dehydrated from how hard they end up pushing their bodies. Many are unaware of the consequences that eating disorders can cause physically. For females, if they push their body too much, they can miss periods and just stop having them all together, which may sound like a blessing to some, but is actually very serious as it stunts growth and development for young girls. The range of problems that

eating disorders can cause on the body can go from mundane things like ending up having anemia from lack of iron and minerals from not eating, to having a full-on heart attack because of the strain put on your heart.

"I was anemic, and my period had stopped, eating hurts now. Anything more than a basket of fries feels like my stomachs going to burst," Olives said.

It's a bit different for those with bulimia, throwing up meals can lead to your teeth rotting from the stomach acid. When you throw up, the stomach acid can rip up your throat lining and stomach lining over time. To those who resort to laxatives aren't safe either as excessive use of laxatives can lead to severe dehydration, weakness and fainting to more severe thing like kidney damage.

"I purposely drink coffee on an empty stomach because I know it'll act as a laxative, and I drink tons of water to keep myself feeling full," Olives

said. You can't really get over an eating disorder. You can't just make an anorexic person just eat a burger or tell a person with binge eating disorder to stop eating. It's a long process, with enough therapy and support it is possible to change. An eating disorder can be very tricky to deal with as there are many things that can trigger it.

"Since I could remember, my family's been on diets and constantly talking about weight. My dad would always grab my love handles and pointed out every roll, every time I gained weight, every extra portion I'd take, it really goes to your head when you're just a kid," Olivia said.

Eating disorders are a pattern of eating and just like patterns, they're hard to break. To change a toxic mindset is possible, and it all starts with asking for help. It takes time but it's a journey towards self-love. Being able to be comfortable with your body and being able to eat without criticizing yourself for it. Surrounding yourself around positive people is very important. Negative people can feed that negative mindset.

"When I get bad, my friends notice, and they constantly check up on me, my best friends keeps tabs on me asking if I've had breakfast and inviting me over for dinner almost every night, having a support system helps, but it's also just as easy to say no to dinner, I guess it's all up to me whether I want to get better," Olives said

The signs that show that someone is struggling from an eating disorder aren't always clear. Not only that, but most people with eating disorders are in denial. They believe what they're doing isn't hurting them. People with eating disorders aren't always open about they're eating struggles. The warning signs aren't always clear so having help from a professional is very helpful. Taylor Ash is a certified therapist who helps people with mental health problems and eating disorders. Being able to see the warning signs as soon as possible is very important

"Some of the signs that someone is struggling with an eating disorder are dramatic change in weight, either gain or loss that cannot be explained by another medical condition, change in clothing to either hide or show changes in body, excusing self around or during meal times, excessive interest in calories or exercise regimens, changes in bodily regulations (such as menstrual cycle), withdrawing, hiding food or avoiding it all together," Ash said

Anything is progress, if someone with an eating disorder manages to eat something be proud. If they managed to stop themselves from binge eating be proud and even if they couldn't, don't beat them over the head about it, because they're probably already beating themselves up about it already. Allow them to forgive themselves because only they can change themselves. If they managed to keep a meal down today be proud, be supportive, because eating disorders are tough and so are the people who suffer from them. There are many ways to help someone struggling with an eating disorder

"Asking for help, talking about feelings, and exploring the reasons behind the disordered eating are all great places to start. There are several online resources in addition to seeking out professional help as well. Encourage them to talk to someone about their struggles. Invite them to do things even if it involves food, ask if there are things they need help with, suggest light activity such as walks or things to do outside. Most importantly encourage them to get professional help or a trusted adult to talk too." Ash said.

Coping skills are very important for those struggling from eating disorders. The eating disorder itself is already a form of coping, a very dangerous and unhealthy way of coping.

"Eating disorders are often a form of coping skills themselves. People will utilize food or the control of food to manage or deal with feelings/difficult situations. Coping skills would be things to replace the urge or need to engage in the disordered eating behaviors

(bingeing, purging, restricting). Things to do would be to distract yourself (go for walks, listen to music, call a friend/family member), find ways to express the emotions rather than engaging in the disordered eating patterns (sports, music, art,

"Eating disorders are often a form of coping skills themselves,"

deep breathing), and talking to someone or asking a trusted friend/adult for support or expressing your feelings," Ash said. Bringing light to such a taboo subject is important, it's important to understand what eating disorders are and how to help. Eating disorders have a higher death rate than any other mental illness, knowing that, making sure to get help is a must. Those suffering with one can get better, and it all starts with bringing awareness and resources to the light and letting them know that they aren't alone.

