Eating Disorders

Food for thought

- Western society today equates thinness with health and beauty. In the United States thinness has become a national obsession
- During the last three decades eating disorders have been increasing
- Two eating disorders have at their core a morbid fear of gaining weight

Anorexia Nervosa

- Individual purposely takes in too little nourishment, resulting in body weight that is very low and below that of other people of similar age and gender.
- Individual is very fearful of gaining weight, or repeatedly seeks to prevent weight gain despite low body weight.
- Individual has a distorted body perception, places inappropriate emphasis on weight or shape
- in judgments of herself or himself, or fails to appreciate the serious implications of her or his low weight.

Bulimia Nervosa

- Repeated binge eating episodes.
- Repeated performance of ill- advised compensatory behaviors (e.g., forced vomiting) to prevent weight gain.
- Symptoms take place at least weekly for a period of 3 months.
- Inappropriate influence of weight and shape on appraisal of oneself.

Who is affected by eating disorders?

- 20% of students have said they suspect they had suffered from an eating disorder
- Anorexia
  - 3% women
  - 0.4% men
- Bulimia
  - 2% women
  - 0.2% men

Why are students affected?

- New peer groups
- Difficulty forming new friendships
- New found self-reliance; no longer living under parental rules
- Eating in a cafeteria with an unlimited amount of food; making food choices may be difficult
- Fear of the “Freshman 15”

Why are students affected?

- Dorm-living
- The need to fit in
- Too many commitments
- Academic and financial stress
- Intense pressures to be thin/ “perfect”
- Difficulty managing transition

Treatments

- Weight-Restoration Technique
  - Supportive nursing care, nutritional counseling, and a relatively high-calorie diet
- Cognitive Behavior-Therapy
  - Monitor feelings and food intake and increase awareness of triggers
  - Challenge beliefs on shape and weight
- Reducing Anxiety
  - Learning anxiety inducing situations, which might lead to compulsive behavior, are harmless

Help

- The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)
- Dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders
- If you think you have an eating disorder contact the NEDA helpline