

Eating Disorders in the Workplace

What are eating disorders?

The Spectrum of Eating Behavior^{*}

Intuitive Eating

- Recognizes hunger cues
- Eats when hungry
- Stops when satiated or satisfied
- Eating can be seen as pleasurable
- Can eat mindfully and with intention
- Has more positive body image days than not
- Includes a variety of foods
- Allows for indulgences
- Does not regulate emotions through food
- Engages in movement and activities for enjoyment as well as health

Disordered Eating

- Difficulty with reading body's cues of hunger & fullness
- In and out of diet trends
- Firm dietary restrictions
- Incorporates restriction in their relationship with food
- Eats or restricts to regulate emotions or the environment
- Has more negative body image days than positive ones
- Inflexible with their variety of foods
- Engages in movement to make up for caloric intake

Eating Disorder

- Anorexia Nervosa (AN)
- Bulimia Nervosa (BN)
- Binge Eating Disorder (BED)
- Avoidant and Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)
- Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS)
- Diabulimia
- Orthorexia

^{*}These lists are not extensive and many individuals do not get diagnosed. Behaviors are experienced on a spectrum as well. All individuals struggling with their relationship with food and body deserve support.

What are the warning signs?

- Extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues
- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, dieting, and/or body image
- Development of abnormal, secretive, extreme, or ritualized food or eating habits
- Withdrawal from usual friends and activities
- Evidence of binge eating, such as the disappearance of a large amount of food
- Evidence of purging behaviors, including frequent trips to the bathroom after meals, self-induced vomiting, periods of fasting, or laxative, diet pill, or diuretic abuse
- Compulsive or excessive exercising
- Feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, or irritability

How can you help your workplace?

- Provide resources to employees (e.g. NEDA brochures, company health plan benefits, list of local providers, etc.)
- Educate yourself on the signs and symptoms of disordered eating
- Share your concerns—respectfully
- Screen and intervene (www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/screening)
- Create a supportive workplace culture
 - Develop open communication
 - Avoid conversations about food, diet, and body shape
 - Provide flexibility to attend appointments
 - Offer a quiet place to eat

Tips: Workplace Wellness Programs

- Avoid programs that focus on weight or weight loss
- Programs involving exercise and nutrition should be strictly voluntary
- Avoid programs that call for competition and weigh-ins

If you are concerned about a workplace wellness program's potentially harmful effects, share your concerns with your HR department.

Tips: Messaging

- Look at the messaging around your workplace (e.g. signs promoting calorie counting)
- Limit “diet talk”
- Be sensitive talking about personal diet plans, weight goals, or exercise regimen
- Refrain from commenting on someone's weight loss/gain or eating behavior

Resources



Online

[National Eating Disorders Association \(NEDA\)](#)
[The Eating Disorder Foundation](#)
[Project Heal](#)



Podcasts

[Food Psych Podcast with Christy Harrison](#)
[Body Kindness with Rebecca Scritchfield](#)
[The Appetite by Opal: Food+Body Wisdom](#)



Instagram

[@chr1styharrison](#)
[@jennifer_rollin](#)
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Books

[Sick Enough](#) by Jennifer Gaudiani
[What Causes Eating Disorders – And What Do They Cause?](#) by Dr. Guido Frank
[Anti-Diet: Reclaim Your Time, Money, Well-Being, and Happiness Through Intuitive Eating](#) by Christy Harrison MPH RD
[Health at Every Size: The Surprising Truth About Your Weight](#) by Linda Bacon
[Recover Your Perspective: A Guide to Understanding Your Eating Disorder and Creating Recovery Using CBT, DBT, and ACT](#) by Dr. Janean Anderson