



# POST PANDEMIC TREATMENT OF ADOLESCENTS WITH EATING DISORDERS

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# OBJECTIVES

01

Factors that contribute to greater vulnerability to eating disorders as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

02

Evidence-based treatment objectives necessary for sustained recovery from an eating disorder.

03

Opportunities for therapeutic growth as a result of pandemic associated changes in family and social structures.

# OVERVIEW OF EATING DISORDERS

A complex mental illness characterized by:

- Extreme eating behaviors (restriction, bingeing, purging; anorexia, bulimia, binge eating)
- An overvaluation of shape and weight
- Common psychological factors such as low self esteem, perfectionism, and body image distortion
- Nearly 1/2 of ALL Americans know someone with an Eating Disorder
- Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 with anorexia have 10 times the risk of dying compared to their same-aged peers.
- **Eating Disorders have the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest mortality rate only behind opioid deaths**
- **Extensive treatment is the norm**
- **Post Pandemic Outcomes are expected to worsen**



## MEDICAL COMPLICATIONS

- 10% Fatalities
- Immunodeficiency
- Type 2 diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Gastrointestinal problems
  - GERD, Gastroparesis
- Polycystic Ovary Syndrome
- Osteoporosis /Osteopenia
- Gastric or Esophageal Tear/Rupture
- Multiple Organ Failure
- Cardiac Arrest
- Refeeding CHF
- Renal Failure
- Suicide
- Impacts ALL areas of functioning



# FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO EATING DISORDERS



# CONTRIBUTING FACTORS: BIOLOGICAL



- Genetics
  - Increased risk with family history of eating disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders-- (Anorexia -12X and Bulimia -4X)
- Temperament (harm avoidant, impulsive)
- Altered neurochemistry, endorphins, malnutrition
- Restriction/Binging/Purging can alter growth
- Presence of food allergies / restrictions



# CONTRIBUTING FACTORS: SOCIOCULTURAL



Instagram



celebrity weight gain

Shape Magazine

Selena Gomez Was Being Body Shamed for Gaining Weight As a Result of Her Lupus

... Up About Being Body Shamed for Gaining Weight Amidst Lupus Battle ...  
(Related: How Celebrity Social Media Affects Your Mental Health ...  
Nov 12, 2019



TheTalko.com

15 Celebs Who Got Thicker In 2019 | TheTalko

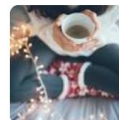
When a popular celebrity gains a few pounds, a photo of him or her ... body positivity, so she is so over all the hate about her weight gains.  
Jul 6, 2019



New York Post

Drinking coffee could help prevent holiday weight gain

Scientists at the University of Illinois say that consuming caffeine can limit weight gain and cholesterol production, even while eating a diet high ...  
Dec 24, 2019



# CONTRIBUTING FACTORS: PSYCHOLOGICAL



- Feeling Overwhelmed
- Feelings of inadequacy or failure
- Feeling out of control
- History of abuse
- History of being teased
- Extreme thinking
- Poor self-esteem
- Need for approval
- Obsessive tendencies
- Personal illness
- Perfectionistic traits
- Response to change
- Response to stress (sports, academic)
- Strained family relationships
- Trauma



# WHAT DO EMOTIONS HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

View emotional experiences as **unwanted** and **intolerable**



Use symptoms to **avoid, control or suppress the intensity** of uncomfortable emotion



Our patients are **stuck in this short-term solution cycle** with their limited range of emotion regulation strategies

**Negative Reinforcement:**  
the GOOD  
feeling you get  
when you take  
something BAD  
away.

# TRAUMA

- Unresolved trauma and/or PTSD can be an important perpetuating factor in the maintenance of symptoms
- Studies show that individuals with bulimia and binge eating disorder have significantly higher rates of PTSD than those without an eating disorder
- In much the same way abuse of certain substances is used to self-medicate, binge eating and/or purging appear to be behaviors that facilitate:
  - Reducing the hyperarousal or anxiety associated with trauma
  - The numbing, avoidance, and even forgetting of traumatic experiences
  - The challenge here is that we must learn to interact with our food
- Traumatized people with eating disorders demonstrate high levels of dissociative symptoms, such as being unable to remember the traumatic event.

# TOXIC / CHRONIC STRESS

- ACEs
- Living in under-resourced or racially segregated neighborhoods
- Frequently moving
- Experiencing food insecurity
- Can change brain development and affect such things as attention, decision-making, learning, and future response to stress

[Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC](#)





# The RISKS of DIETING

- Moderate dieting among adolescent leads to 5x risk of developing an ED compared to non-dieters;
  - Extreme dieting 18x more likely
- 95% regain weight (and more) within 1-5 years
  - “Set Point” may increase over time
- Damages relationship with food & body’s hunger/fullness cues
- Increased risk of binge eating episodes & cravings
- Slowed metabolism, malnutrition
- Unintended effects such as endocrine dysfunction, mood & cognitive issues



<http://www.cswd.org/index.html>

# FOOD INSECURITY

- (2017) – Trinity University and Howard University..503 adult clients of food pantries affiliated with the San Antonio Food Bank
- FI: inadequate access to sufficient food, both in terms of quantity and quality, secondary to lack of financial and other resources (Coleman-Jensen, Rabbitt, Gregory & Singh, 2015).
  - Weight stigma was higher and there was elevated dietary restraint in group of people with hungry children at home
  - Child hungry group reported significantly more binge eating, over-eating, and night eating than other groups
  - Child hungry group also reported higher compensatory behaviors such as vomiting, laxative/diuretics, skipping meals, and over exercise
  - 17% in the Child hungry group reported enough to be diagnosed with an eating disorder
  - Pattern of binge eating and compensating emerged in child hungry group

Becker, C. B., Middlemass, K., Taylor, B., Johnson, C., & Gomez, F. (2017)

# EATING DISORDERS AND EXERCISE

There is a strong link between exercise compulsion and various forms of eating disorders.

Between 40% and 80% of anorexia nervosa patients are prone to excessive exercise in their efforts to avoid weight gain.

An estimated 90-95% of college students diagnosed with an eating disorder also belong to a fitness facility.

33% of Male and 62% of female college athletes report disordered eating patterns, only 2% reported seeking help

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/statistics-research-eating-disorders> , NEDA







# MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

- Transgender individuals experience eating disorders at rates significantly higher than cisgender individuals.
- Black teenagers are 50% more likely than white teenagers to exhibit bulimic behavior, such as bingeing and purging.
- In a study of adolescents, researchers found that Hispanics were significantly more likely to suffer from bulimia nervosa than their non-Hispanic peers. The researchers also reported a trend towards a higher prevalence of binge eating disorder in all minority groups.
- Teenage girls from low-income families are 153% more likely to be bulimic than girls from wealthy families.
- Despite similar rates of eating disorders among non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics, African-Americans, and Asians in the United States, people of color are significantly less likely to receive help for their eating issues.
- When presented with identical case studies demonstrating disordered eating symptoms in white, Hispanic and African-American women, clinicians were asked to identify if the woman's eating behavior was problematic. 44% identified the white woman's behavior as problematic; 41% identified the Hispanic woman's behavior as problematic, and only 17% identified the black woman's behavior as problematic. The clinicians were also less likely to recommend that the African-American woman should receive professional help.

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND EATING DISORDERS



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## SCOPE OF COVID-19 IMPACT ON EATING DISORDERS

- Amongst College Students, all types of ED increased between 2009-2021, except restrictive ED in young men.
- Internalizing problems reported by U.S. adolescents and parents rose from 31% in 2018 to 56% in 2021, with more adverse changes for girls, low-income families, single parent households and LGBTQ+ youth
- Sharp increases in child/adolescent ER visits (up to 66%) and hospitalizations (37%) due to ED in 2021
- During the pandemic, it is postulated the restrictive behaviors may have increased because other ED behaviors were more noticeable (i.e. bingeing, purging).

(Chavira, D, Pontin, C., & Ramos, G. 2022,; Gao, Y., Bagheri, N., & Furuya-Kanamori, L., 2022; Parsons, H., Murphy, B., Maone, D., & Holme I., 2021; Tavoracci, MP, Ladner, J., and Dechelotte, P, 2021)

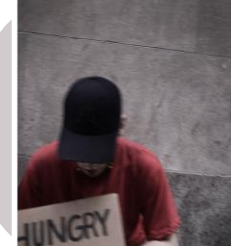
# PANDEMIC RELATED FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ED



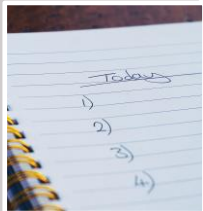
Social Isolation



Fear/Uncertainty/Loss  
regarding COVID-19  
(initially)



Food Insecurity



Loss of routine



Disruption in  
accessing care



Drive for  
exercise

Nutritional/Weight  
Restoration

Medical/Psychiatric  
Stabilization

Building awareness of the  
Emotional Experiences that  
are being avoided

Increasing tolerance of  
emotions so that you can  
begin to understand and  
address the  
needs/information needed  
from the emotion

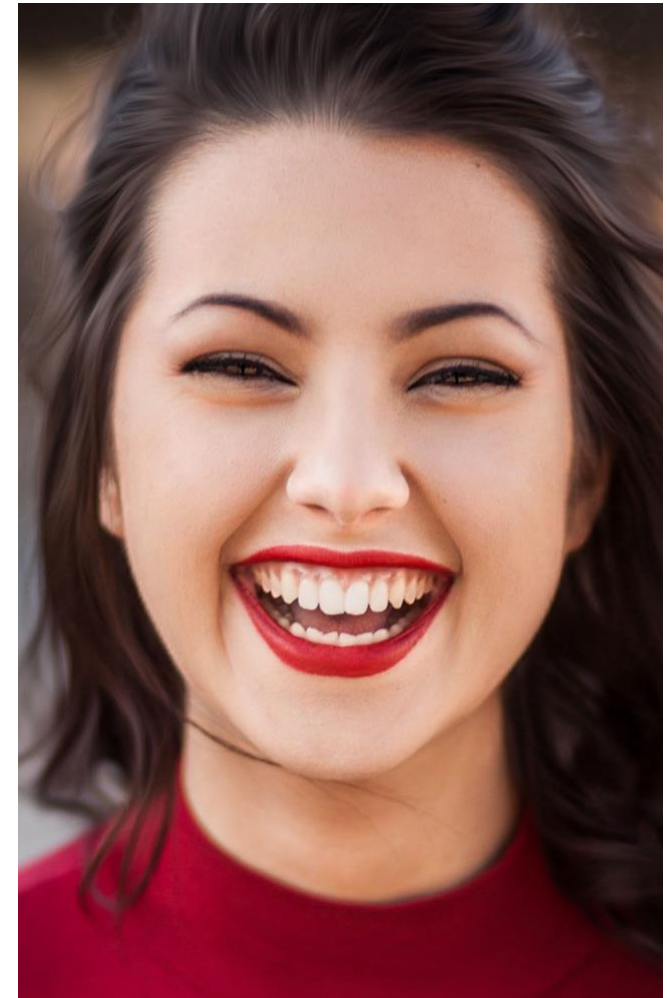
Developing Skills to change  
one's interpretation of their  
emotions and engage in  
behaviors that do not  
promote emotional  
avoidance

Develop a hierarchy of  
challenging exposures to  
emotions that will allow  
one to practice these skills

## TREATMENT OBJECTIVES

# CORE COMPONENTS OF RENFREW'S UNIFIED TREATMENT MODEL

- Awareness and Acceptance of self and others
- Emotional regulation
- Emotional Tolerance
- Flexibility in behaviors and thoughts
- Relational awareness and acceptance of self compared to others
- Reduction in avoidance behaviors and return to school and social functions





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# UNIFIED TREATMENT FAMILY INTERVENTIONS

- 
- Basic Eating Disorder Education
  - Identifying Problems and SMART Goals
  - Understanding Caregiver Styles and Responses
  - Emotion Coaching
  - Transitioning Parents to be Recovery Coaches



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# PANDEMIC RELATED GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Reckoning of  
Stereotypes

Public policies with ED  
informed lens  
(nutrition labels,  
LGBTQ issues)

School environments  
provide balanced  
information and  
guidance on  
weight/food/exercise

Curating Social Media  
for increasing positive  
self-care/esteem

WFH increases  
interaction and shared  
household tasks, also  
decreases self-care

Access to mental  
health and support  
services, including  
parents'

Cultivating Family  
traditions and activity

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QUESTIONS?



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*I thank  
you*

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