

Distorted image caused by eating disorders



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Eating disorders are psychological disorders that affect individuals not only psychologically but physiologically as well. All eating disorders share the same characteristic of obsessive and excessive habits that often times result in tragic repercussions to the body. Furthermore, society and media has been the major source that has influenced this type of disorders among people. Anyone can be affected by this disorders however young women are more prone to be affected by them. Everyone affected by eating disorders have the same ideology and can only see a distorted image of themselves and not what they truly look like. Eating disorders usually go unnoticed for a long time; this disorder can lead to other disorders such as low self-esteem, self-harm, anxiety and depression. There are three major eating disorders, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder (BED) among others. They all can lead to tragic endings, and serious illness such as heart failure, osteoporosis, infertility and other diseases that can quietly develop and become tragically dangerous to the individual.

Most of the time eating disorders go unnoticed because the symptoms are not noticeable to people around. Anyone can suffer from them; a person can be underweight, overweight or normal weight and can be suffering from eating disorders. In order to achieve the so-called " perfect" body, people simply begin by dieting and daily exercising. When that does not work, some might turn to other drastic methods such as " Fasting" or taking laxatives to lose unwanted calories which can result in dehydration or even self-inducing vomit. There is also a cycle that repeats when they feel guilty for eating they turn to food for support as well.

Anorexia nervosa is found in males or females it knows no gender, one of the characteristics displayed by this disorder most people who suffer from it are tragically thin, obsessed with their image and weight. A person suffering from anorexia has an obsessive fear of gaining weight even if they are thin, they perform an excessive amount of exercise, and suffer from anxiety when it comes to food. “ Anorexia nervosa is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.”(nationaleatingdisorders. org, 2016)

Malnutrition can be a result of depriving the body from food it needs. It is important to emphasize that eating disorders cause physiological problems as well. One of the problems that develop through time due to malnutrition it affects the bones directly leading to osteopenia the loss of bone calcium. Furthermore, it leads to osteoporosis it weakens the body causing bones to fracture, heart failure develops, brain shrinks due to malnutrition, dry skin and dry hair are also a side effect of eating disorders as well as kidney failure. “ When your body doesn’t get the fuel it needs to function normally, it goes into starvation mode and slows down to conserve energy. Essentially, your body begins to consume itself.” (Melinda Smith, Jeanne Segal, 2016). The more the body consumes itself the more the medical complications may increase leading to tragic endings.

Bulimia consists of a person continuously binge eating or consuming an alarming amount of food then feeling guilty and obsessively seeing a distorted image of them. Which then leads to the individual doing anything to avoid gaining weight one method could be by self-inducing vomit, it has negative effects on the body or by developing habit of excessive exercising.

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Some symptoms that can also be seen in people who suffer from bulimia are depression; anxiety, and even Obsessive-compulsive disorder. Dehydration can be a side effect of self-induced vomit. “ You lose fluids when you throw up and/or use diuretics and laxatives”(Shaye Boddington, 2016). The use of laxatives regularly causes the individual to lose fluids leading to dehydration. On contrary, the symptoms and side effects of Bulimia might not be so noticeable if compared to anorexia. Bulimia does not show any drastic physical change. The only physical change that might be noticeable would be a sore throat, a severe stomachache that can often be ulcers, and discoloration of teeth. “ Eating can be an emotional release so it’s not surprising that people binge and purge when feeling angry, depressed, stressed, or anxious.” (Melinda Smith, Jeanne Segal, 2016) people lean on food to feel better and once again they go back to the vicious cycle of eating feeling guilty and repeating it all over again.

Frequent purging can also develop anemia, making the individual look pale.

Binge Eating Disorder (BED) is also a widely known eating disorder that harms the body and the individual psychologically. While many people tend to over eat, when compulsive eating in a small amount of time becomes a habit, is when it becomes a problem. “ During a binge, you may eat even when you’re not hungry and continue eating long after you’re full” (Melinda Smith, Jeanne Segal, 2016). Not being able to stop yourself from compulsively eating is one of the symptoms that characterized (BED). Nonetheless, what happens after bingeing occurs is what has the biggest negative impact in their life. After the individual is done eating one of their initial feelings they have is guiltiness and shame over their eating habits.

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Feeling guilty and bad about your appearance correlates to more binge eating. People often turn to food to cope with their emotions. “ Eating to feel better, feeling even worse, and then turning back to food for relief.” (Melinda Smith, Jeanne Segal, 2016). It is a sequence of events that repeat and lead to bingeing none stop. Some of the physical side effects of binge eating disorders are obesity, sleep apnea, depression, and type II diabetes, and substance abuse.

Recovering from eating disorders is a long lifetime commitment, that requires of a lot of self-determination, help and support from family and the people around you. Looking for professional help is also one of the most effective ways to overcoming these disorders. Psychotherapy happens to be one of the most effective methods when it comes to treating eating disorders. “ Psychotherapy are methods of treatment that provide the patient a safe place to tell their individual story.”(Randi Hutter Epstein, 2009) Nonetheless, everything starts with the individual wanting to overcome and accepting what they are experiencing. Staying away from things that may provoke the urge to weigh you, compulsive exercise or that just makes the individual feel the need to go back to their old habits. Finding hobbies that will take your time and “ distract you” (Melinda Smith, Jeanne Segal, 2016). From the temptations around you can also be beneficial. Behavioral exercises are one of the methods that seem to help them with heir destructive habits. If the individual has reached a low weight it will be necessary for them to be hospitalized until they are able to re gain control of their body weight.

Eating disorders come from the feeling of wanting to be perfect and to live up to the socially constructed beauty standards. The movie "The Road Within" shows a young woman named Marie in a facility to treat people with psychological disorders. Her physical appearance shows characteristics developed by people who suffer from anorexia. One of the visible characteristics is having a very thin pale body, which allows us to see almost their bones sticking out through her skin as well as dry hair. In one of the scenes in the beginning of the movie Marie is shown in a cafeteria where she is being supervised while eating. The scene shows how as soon as there is a distraction she removes the food from her plate places it in a plastic bag and hides it in her gym bag, when the supervisor goes back to the table she proceeds to show her now clean plate and leaves. These are ingenious habits that people with eating disorders develop and will do anything to avoid the consumption of food. Although there was only a small portion of food she refused to eat it. As punishment she has to do behavioral exercises to help her manage her disorder. The clothes Marie wears is loose and baggy but you are still visibly able to see her tragically thin body.

Throughout the movie Marie appears to be really strong and hardheaded person she is not seen as a person who tries to overcome her disorder. On the contrary she is shown trying to avoid any food never seen eating every time they offer her food she refuses to eat and gets upset when they insist. She always carries a bag where she keeps what appears to be scarf she has been knitting as a way to distract herself from her habits. Half way through the movie in a scene it shows another characteristic and side effect of malnutrition when she is hiking up the mountain the whole time she looks

weak and defenseless. Furthermore, once she reaches the top Marie shows a little bit of improvement decides to eat without anyone forcing or telling her to she takes the initiative. Nonetheless, like any other disorder there is always a set back and obstacles and weakness in the persons will to overcome their disorder; Marie can be seen provoking herself to vomit what she had eaten because she felt guilty.

At the end, the moment she reaches her destination along with her friends we can see how she collapses and they rush her to a hospital where they had to revive her. Those are the consequences of severe malnutrition due to anorexia. Heart disease is one of the major causes of death within the people who suffer from eating disorders. Her heart had given up before, she shows signs of denial she believes there is nothing wrong with her and her eating habits and does not want to be helped. Marie's body due to the lack of food in her system her body started consuming itself which led her to collapse and for her heart to stop beating until they revived her.

Watching " The Road Within" and seeing Marie's disorder helped me understand more how people are affected in the long run. I knew a couple things about eating disorders before doing the media assignment. However, I am now able to understand that the road to recovery is not easy and not as simple as telling someone to just eat more or try eating less or avoid food in order to not binge but something more complex. It is hard for the individual to overcome it if they do not accept that their condition is critical and can cause their body severe damage. I have always been interested in eating disorders and I will continue to learn more about it.

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