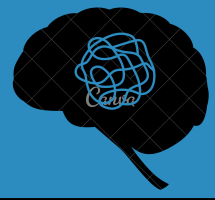


Eating Disorders



What are Eating Disorders?



Eating disorders refer to a cluster of serious mental health conditions characterised by a preoccupation with food, body shape, and weight, as well as appearance. An eating disorder can significantly affect an individual's physical and mental health, and in extreme cases, can lead to death, if left untreated.



Types of Common Eating Disorders



Anorexia Nervosa

- Characterised by food restriction, being severely underweight (as per BMI), a fear of gaining weight, and disturbances in body perception (i.e. failing to recognize the low body weight).
- Low energy intake is either through restriction of food or through binge-purge cycles (i.e. eating in excess, followed by removal of the consumed food).

Bulimia Nervosa

- Characterised by **cycles of bingeing** (eating large portions of food within a short time which appears uncontrolled), followed by **compensatory strategies** (behaviours used to get rid of consumed calories).
- These cycles are performed in the context of an overconcern of body weight and shape, and can cause a lot of shame and guilt. Individuals are usually of normal BMI.

Binge Eating Disorder

- Characterised by recurrent episodes of binge eating (eating the equivalent of 3-4 meals within a short time, in an uncontrolled manner), without the use of compensatory strategies. Individuals may have a high BMI.



Disordered Eating Behaviours

Even without a full-blown eating disorder, individuals may struggle with disordered eating behaviours which can significantly affect their physical and mental wellbeing. Some examples include:

- Frequent and obsessive dieting.
- Meal skipping and anxiety about eating certain types of food.
- A preoccupation with one's food, weight, and shape.
- Spending a significant portion of the day thinking about food.
- Avoiding social gatherings or outings due to concerns around eating.
- Shame and guilt after meals.
- The urge to engage in exercising or any behaviour to prevent weight gain after a meal.
- Usage of food to regulate emotions.

Helping Yourself

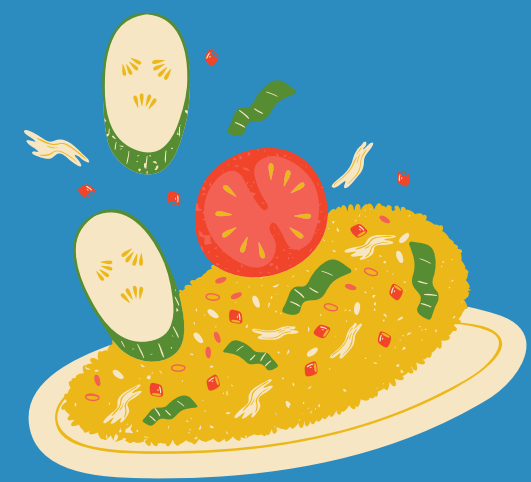
Be less self-critical towards yourself by shifting some of your attention to your achievements, successes, and things you are grateful for, however small.



Engage in hobbies to help reconnect you to yourself. This can serve as a reminder that there are things beyond the challenges you are experiencing.

If you don't have any hobbies, perhaps it's time to explore this!

Reach out to people whom you trust and be open about your feelings.



Helping Someone Else

Offer your support by letting them know what you are concerned about (e.g. their health, wellbeing). Reassure them that they are not alone and encourage them to seek help from a doctor, psychologist and/or a psychiatrist.



Individuals with eating disorders often struggle to acknowledge the severity of the issue at hand. It is important to remain calm and supportive. Validating and acknowledging their fear of seeking help can be comforting.

A physical evaluation can provide useful information about any medical complications, current health issues, and other mental health issues that may be present; this may be a good place to start their road to recovery.



Finding Help at Monash

At Monash, students can seek help from the Counselling, Health and Wellness Services. More information about the counsellors and psychologists that can support you is available at this link: <https://www.monash.edu.my/student-services/support-services/counselling-and-wellness/meet-our-counsellors>