

## Eating Disorders

### How to Help when you Think a Friend has a Problem with Eating

The most common time of life for an eating disorder to develop is between the ages of 17 - 20. This coincides with the college years. Research has shown that as many as a third of college-age women have disordered eating patterns. Many young males also have body image concerns and disordered eating patterns. Participation in sports, such as track, swimming, wrestling, cycling, dance and figure skating, is an added risk factor.

#### Signs:

- Severely restricting eating
- Secretive about eating
- Secretive vomiting
- Excessive/Compulsive exercise, sometimes continuing to exercise despite physical injuries
- Excessive thoughts and comments about body shape and size
- Going to the rest room immediately after a meal
- Excessive or daily use of laxatives
- Use of diet pills

#### Signs that an individual needs immediate medical care:

- Fainting
- Vomiting Blood
- Chest pain

#### How to Help

Your attitude is important in encouraging the individual toward help. Disordered eating is often a way of coping with stress promoted by media, popular culture and each of us when we emphasize physical appearance as a measure of worth or popularity. There is also some evidence suggesting a hereditary vulnerability to eating disorders. These behaviors are not easy to change. **Do not judge and do not diagnose.**

- ✓ If the individual has fainted, has chest pain or is vomiting blood, this is a medical emergency. Contact Campus Safety and Security (518-783-2999) for immediate medical assistance.
- ✓ Do not diagnose or judge the individual.
- ✓ Maintain the confidentiality of the individual by not talking about the situation with anyone other than professional staff such as Residence Directors, Center for Counseling and Student Development, Health Services and the Dean of Students.
- ✓ Support the individual by being available to listen to what is going on in her/his life. Make the focus of support not on the eating behaviors but on any life issues that may be causing stress, such as family, relationships, or academic problems.
- ✓ If you have a past history of bingeing and purging do not share your methods with other residents. This may trigger the behavior for others and normalize the behavior in the community. Do get support for yourself.

## What can you do to prevent eating disorders?

- ✓ Minimize your own focus on physical appearance
- ✓ When you want to compliment someone focus on attributes other than appearance.
- ✓ Speak up when someone makes negative comments about another person's shape or size.
- ✓ Participate in National Eating Disorders awareness week (end of February)  
[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) for information or contact the CCSD (783-2342 or the Thea Bowman Center for Women (783-5944).

## Important Points to remember:

An individual's disordered eating behaviors can be disruptive or concerning to others in the campus community. The Center for Counseling and Student Development will meet with students who are concerned about a friend or roommate's disordered eating.

Remember that **counseling is a confidential relationship**. This can be frustrating when you are concerned about a friend. While the Center for Counseling will not be able to disclose information to you about the individual's treatment or even if the individual is in treatment, if you have observed ongoing or new behaviors you can make this information known to your RD and/or to a CCSD counselor.

## Other Sources of Information:

North East Comprehensive Care Center for Eating Disorders (NECCCED): A helpline for medical, mental health counseling and nutritional counseling within the Northeastern New York area. NECCED offers appointments in the local area for assessments with a treatment team including a physician, psychologist and nutritionist. 1-888-747- 4727 (24 hour help line).

<http://www.ulifeline.org/schools/siena> Worried about your friend's behaviors? The Self e-Valuator, a confidential online mental health assessment, was developed for ULifeline by Duke University Medical Center. Complete a self-assessment to learn telling insights about your current state of mind. The Self e-Valuator provides a valuable and objective perspective if or when you (or a friend) are struggling with troubling thoughts and feelings. Also at this site are fact sheets on body image and eating disorders.

[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org) Prevention materials, national referral hotline

[www.craed.org](http://www.craed.org) – Capital Region Association for Eating Disorders: information on local psychotherapists, nutritionists and physicians who specialize in eating disorders, and factual information on eating disorders.