

## Eating Disorders

**I am anorexic and bulimic and I don't have many people that I can talk to about it. My parents don't wanna talk about it because they just want the problem to go away so they don't bring it up. And I'm afraid to talk to my pastor. I wanna get over this because I am sick of wasting my time worrying about food all the time.**

For many people, an eating disorder starts out as an effort to control something in their life (eating) because everything else seems so out of control. Pretty soon food ends up controlling them instead of them controlling it. Because of the shame, it often becomes a secret sin, so to speak. And the more secretive they are, the more power it has over them. You are not alone. Millions of young people suffer from eating disorders. It's like an addiction, only the addiction is to something that is needed in order to live – food. A lot of people will tell someone who is anorexic or bulimic to just stop it and eat normal. But it's like telling an alcoholic to stop drinking or a drug addict to stop shooting up. The strong desire is there to stop, but the physical and emotional pull is stronger than the desire.

You really need to be honest with others and more importantly, yourself. How often do you abuse? How much or little do you eat? Do you purge? How? Where? What foods are trigger foods? Are you suffering physical problems as a result? These are uncomfortable questions to answer. Let's face it, the details are not glamorous. Sometimes putting these things down on paper really helps you realize and understand how serious it is. Secrecy and hiding only strengthens the bondage, and strengthens the feelings of shame, guilt and aloneness.

But please understand that an eating disorder has very little to do with food. Most of the time, it is more about other issues. What areas of your life seem out of control? Have you been teased, ridiculed, abused, or told in some way that you're not valued? Sadly, our society often communicates that if we don't look and act a certain way that we're not valuable. This is so untrue. You are valuable and cherished for who you were created to be. Still, others feel unnoticed at school and at home and may find that their actions are a way to get attention, even at the expense of their own health. It's apparent through various statistics that teens will readily risk their health and well-being for acceptance from peers. What is it for you? Examine these areas of your life and talk with a counselor or youth pastor about them. Once you can identify why you turn to food as your idol and security blanket, you can begin healing.

You mentioned that you've tried talking to your parents, but have you really told them how serious it is? They may be thinking this is just a phase you're going through. Anorexia and bulimia can be deadly. Do you trust your mom or dad enough to be totally honest with them? You may want to ask them to help you get help. But even if they are unwilling to help you, you must get help. Eating disorders are rarely, if ever, conquered on your own.

Society, especially the American society, wants to tell us that we should make something of ourselves and pull ourselves up by our boot straps, and just try harder and we'll achieve our goals. But God tells us to rely on him and to rely on others to give us wisdom and help. God doesn't want you to face this alone. Please seek help.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

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