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Eating Disorders

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A much discussed and worrisome topic today is growing ratio of eating disorders among people especially youth. Eating disorders are characteristic behavioral disorders which present persistent disturbances in eating behavior with body weight, body image and body shape continuously preoccupying an individual's mind. These behavioral disorders affect a person's social life along with affecting physical and psychological health. Excessive food intake, compulsive strenuous exercise, food restriction, starvation, use of laxatives, vomiting immediately after eating, bingeing and purging are some behaviors which depict the presence of an eating disorder. Collectively, up to 5% population, mostly adolescents and young adults suffer from eating disorders. Usually both male and female of any age and ethnicity are at equal risk of having an eating disorder but generally women suffer more as compared to men. Of eating disorders, anorexia and bulimia nervosa are common among females but can also occur in males. Psychiatric problems also occur hand in hand with eating disorders such as disproportionate mood swings, OCD, anxiety and panic attacks and different drugs abuse. Treatment of eating disorders involves treating psychological as well as physical complications along with addressing malnutrition, GERD and other gastrointestinal problems. Out of other eating disorders bulimia nervosa has shown increasing trends among youth. Binge eating or Bulimia nervosa is eating larger quantity of foods in shorter time span. A binge eater firstly binges on food, feels ashamed of his/her action and weight, purges secretly and also feels guilty for eating too much. While bingeing is done with consuming large quantity of food or filling up to the throat within short time, associated discomfort, nausea and vomiting source the purging phase. Occurrence of bulimia nervosa among young females and adolescents is high but statistics also indicate increasing ratios in young adolescent males. Although bulimia is common among youth, it can affect individuals of all ages and gender having low, normal or high weight. Adolescents and young adults suffering from bulimia nervosa are often those who are mentally preoccupied with weight issues, fear to gain weight, have a dreadful urge to lose weight, are super conscious and discontented with their body image, size and shape. An emblematic case of an individual with bulimia nervosa is often an adolescent to young adult female or male having an enthusiastic, goal oriented, perfectionist, and diligent, introverted and stubborn personality. Such individuals are also awful self-critics and tend to have low self-esteem based on body image distortion. Regardless of the physical parameters, bingeing on large quantities of food and then purging them out gives the person a sense of satisfaction by eating the desired type of food in hefty amounts along with a sense of control and relief by throwing up or excreting it out as an attempt to maintain weight. Generally, the affected individuals do this to eat whatever they want while maintaining or losing weight upon wish. This mechanism also relieves stress, anxiety and reduces negative moods for them, keeping them calm and composed by giving the person a sense of control in at least one aspect of his/her life, which largely explains reason for the increased ratios of bulimia among youth who are constantly subjected to body shaming, peer pressure, fear of being left out, sky rocketing pressure from social media to be and look perfect and to be up to the mark with the societal beauty standards.

