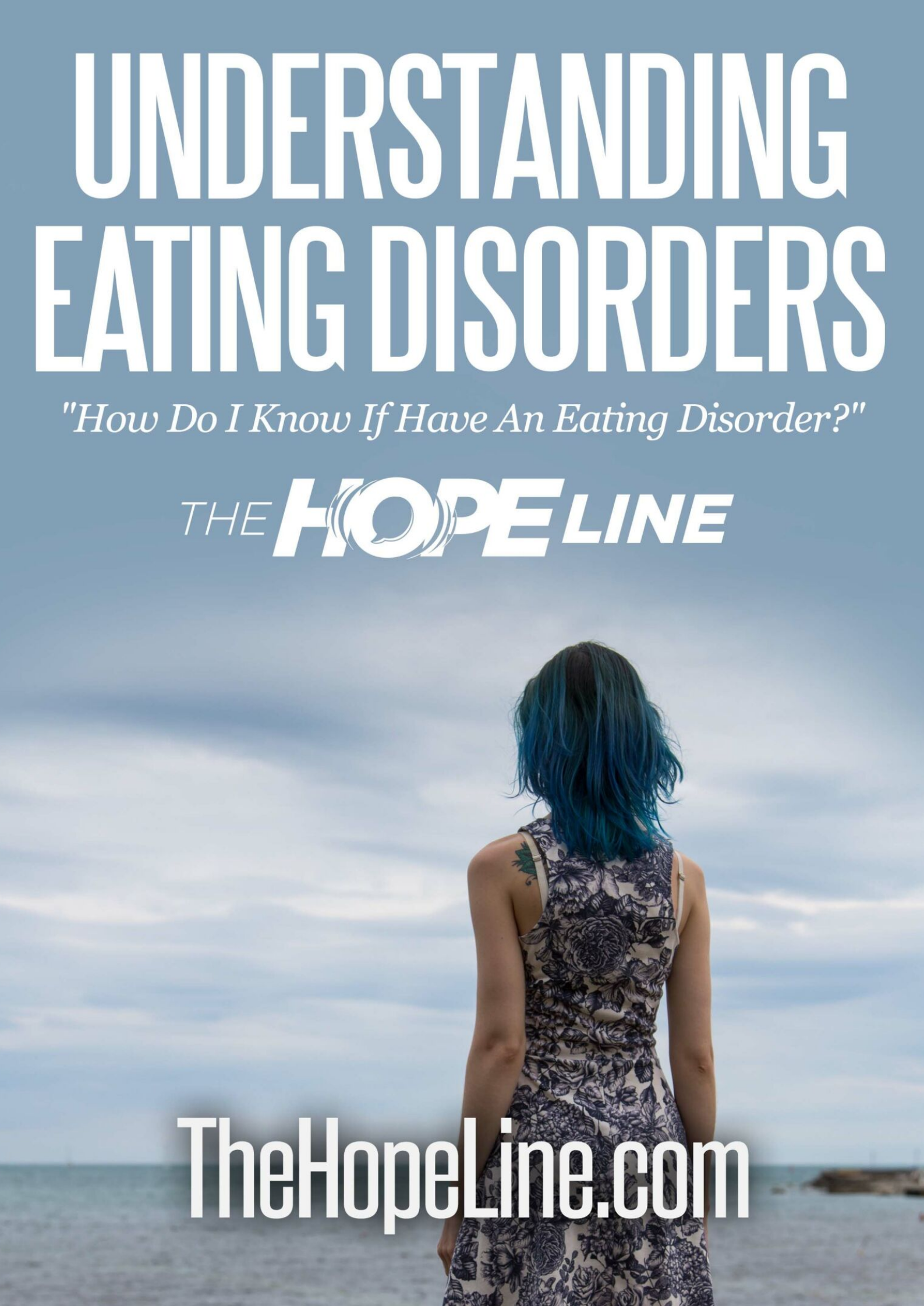


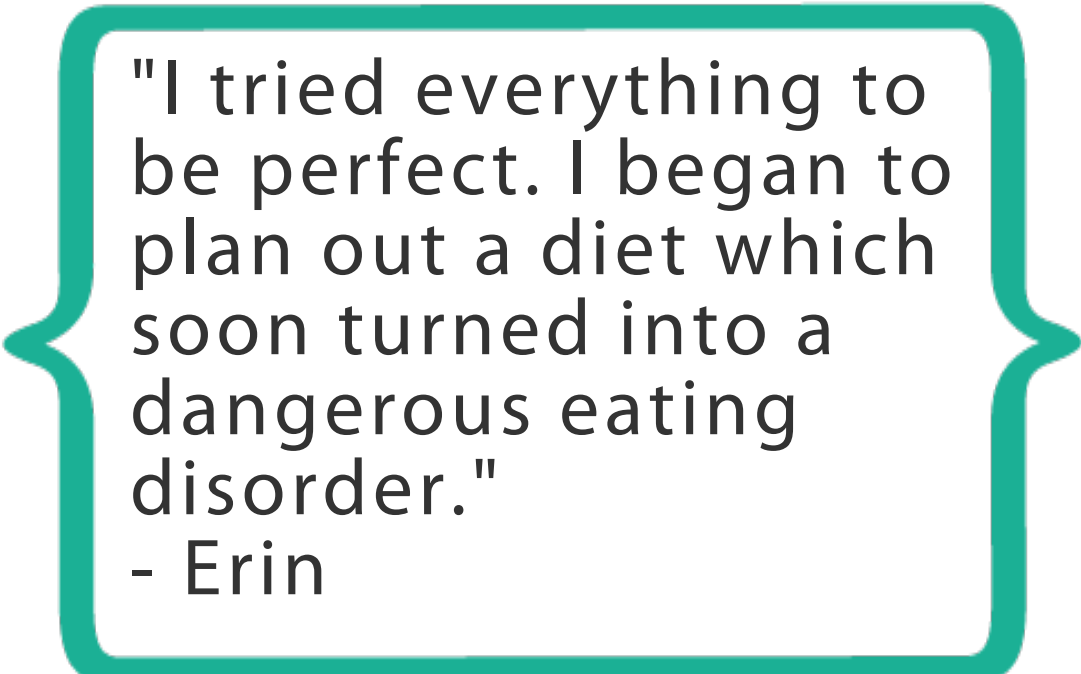
UNDERSTANDING EATING DISORDERS

"How Do I Know If I Have An Eating Disorder?"

THE **HOPE** LINE

TheHopeLine.com



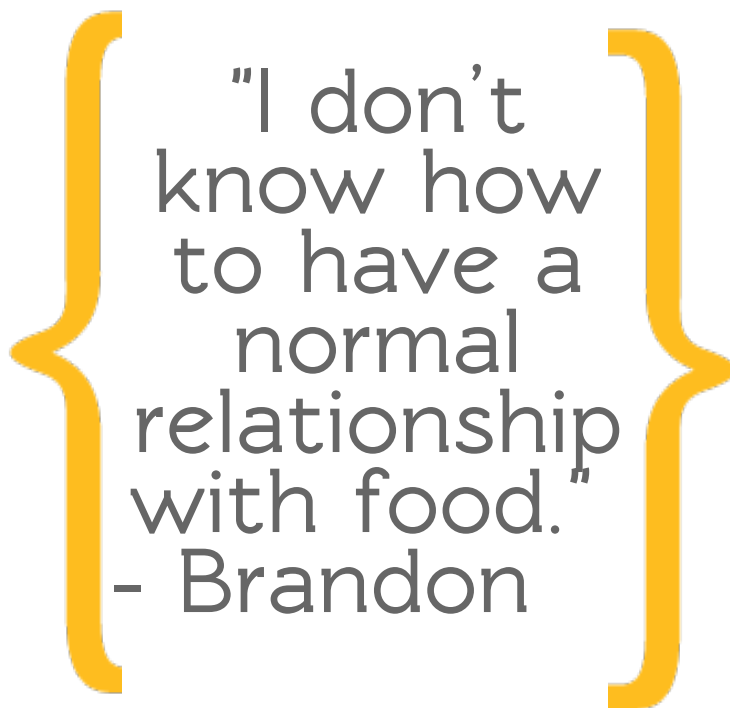


"I tried everything to be perfect. I began to plan out a diet which soon turned into a dangerous eating disorder."

- Erin

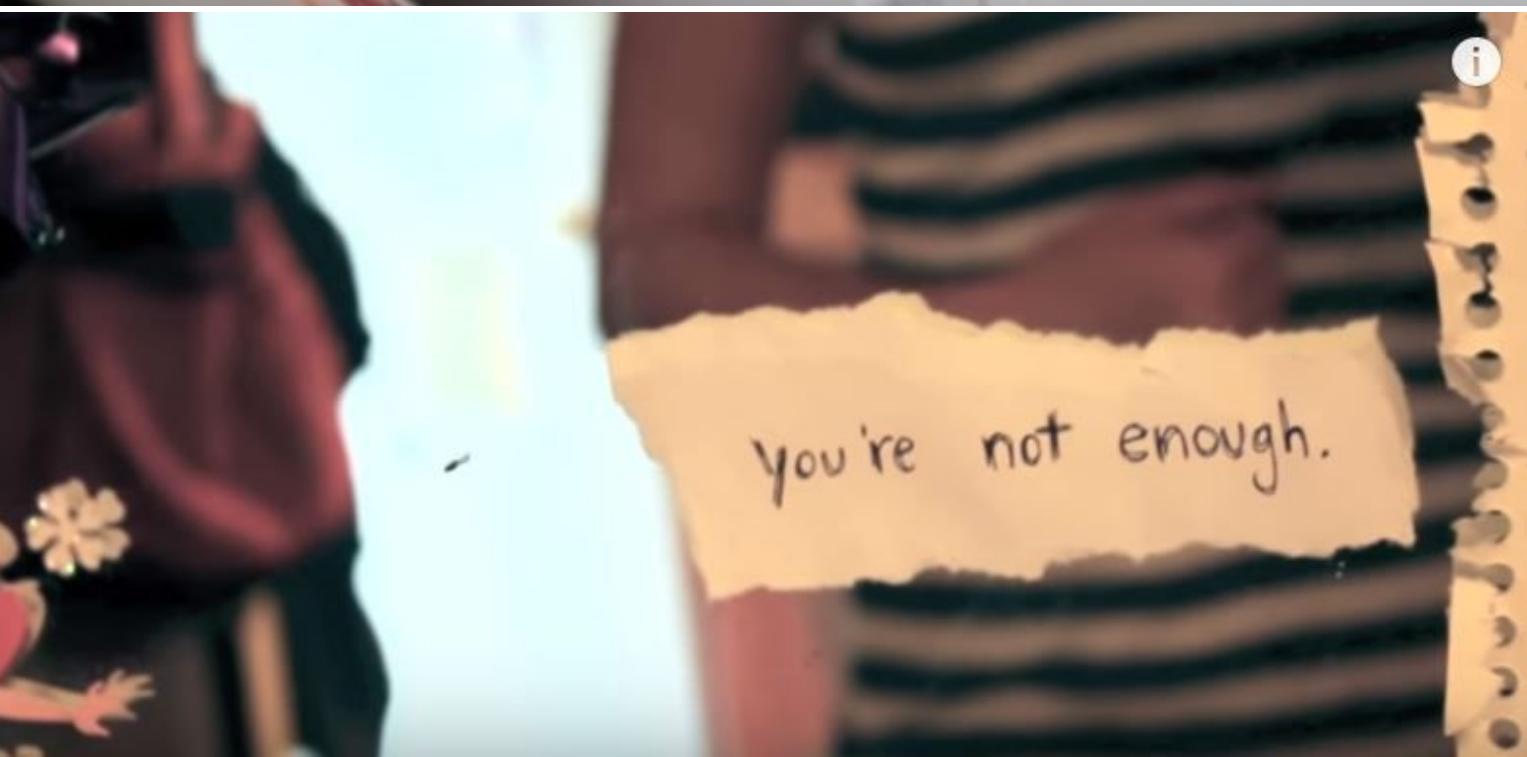
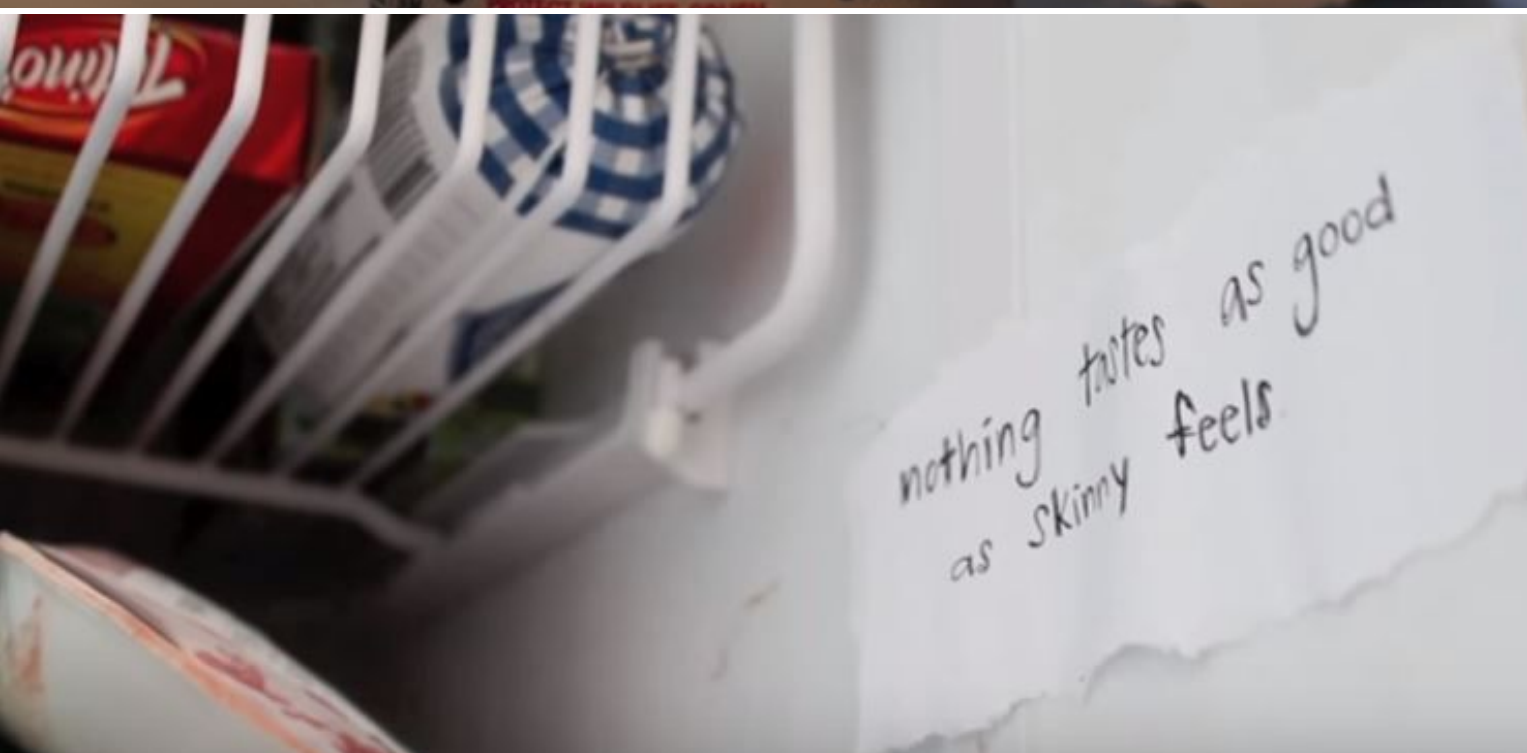
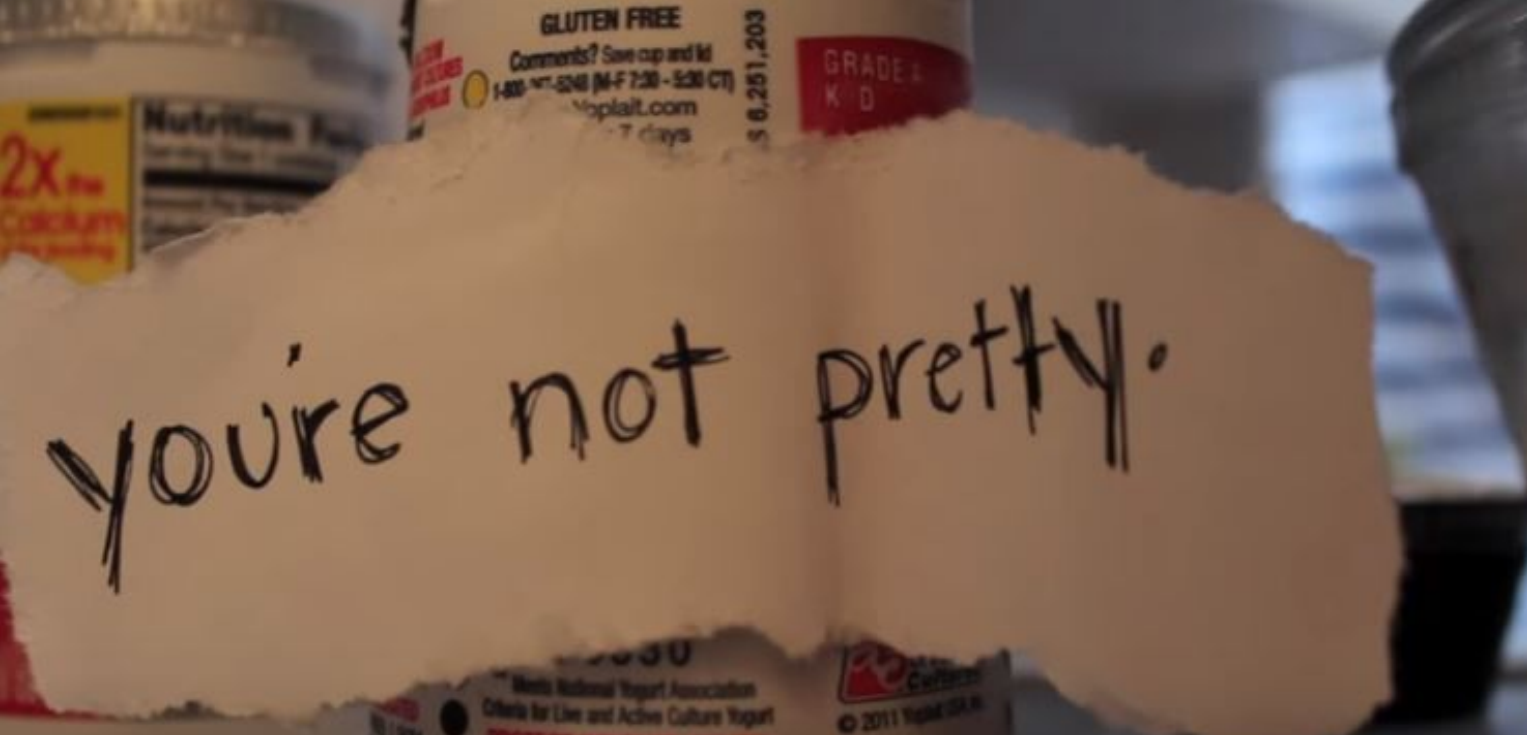
"The more I try to control something the worse I feel."

-Elisa



"I don't know how to have a normal relationship with food."

- Brandon





WHAT ARE EATING DISORDERS?

Eating disorders are a real, treatable medical condition, in which someone has extreme issues with their eating habits that impacts everyday life. People who struggle with eating disorders have a distorted self-image and often become obsessive about their weight and eating habits. These eating issues are often accompanied by other illnesses such as depression, anxiety disorders or substance abuse.

- It's estimated that in the United States, up to 24 million people of all ages suffer from an eating disorder.
- BUT only 1 in 10 people with eating disorders receive treatment.



- 95 % of people with eating disorders are between the ages of 12 and 25
- 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat

MALES AND EATING DISORDERS

10 million
males in the U.
S. suffer from
an eating
disorder at
some point in
their life.



Although eating disorders are often attributed mostly to females, millions of males also struggle with eating disorders. Males dealing with eating disorders are a broad spectrum, from those active in athletic activities to males bullied because of their body or image. In addition to the symptoms of eating disorders we've already covered, below are a few key indicators of eating disorders in males:

- Negative self-image

- Need to be "in control"

- Lowered testosterone levels

- Hair loss

- Being teased about appearance or body



RISK FACTORS FOR DEVELOPING AN EATING DISORDER

There are many reasons why people develop eating disorders, from emotional issues to difficult life transitions.

Gender. Teen girls and young women are more likely to develop eating disorders than males. However, eating disorders do impact teen boys and young men and shouldn't be overlooked due to gender.

Age. Eating disorders can happen to any age group, though it is much more common for people in their teens and early 20's. These years are a time of growth spurts and body changes, leaving many young people overly sensitive to self-image.

Emotional issues. Existing emotional issues can play a role in the development of eating disorders. Those with depression, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder are more likely to struggle with body image issues and eating disorders.

Distorted body image. People who develop eating disorders often have unrealistic ideas about body image, from comparing themselves to others to glorifying a particular look or body type.

Life transitions. A lot of life changes occur in the teen years and 20's. Between experiencing high school, going to college, relationships, breakups, new jobs and other life changes, emotional distress can lead to an eating disorder.

Being involved in athletic or artistic activities. For young adults involved in athletics or artistic activities such as theater, the pressure to maintain a particular body image in order to stay at the top of their sport or activity can lead to an eating disorder.

TYPES OF EATING DISORDERS AND SYMPTOMS



There are 3 basic types of eating disorders commonly diagnosed:

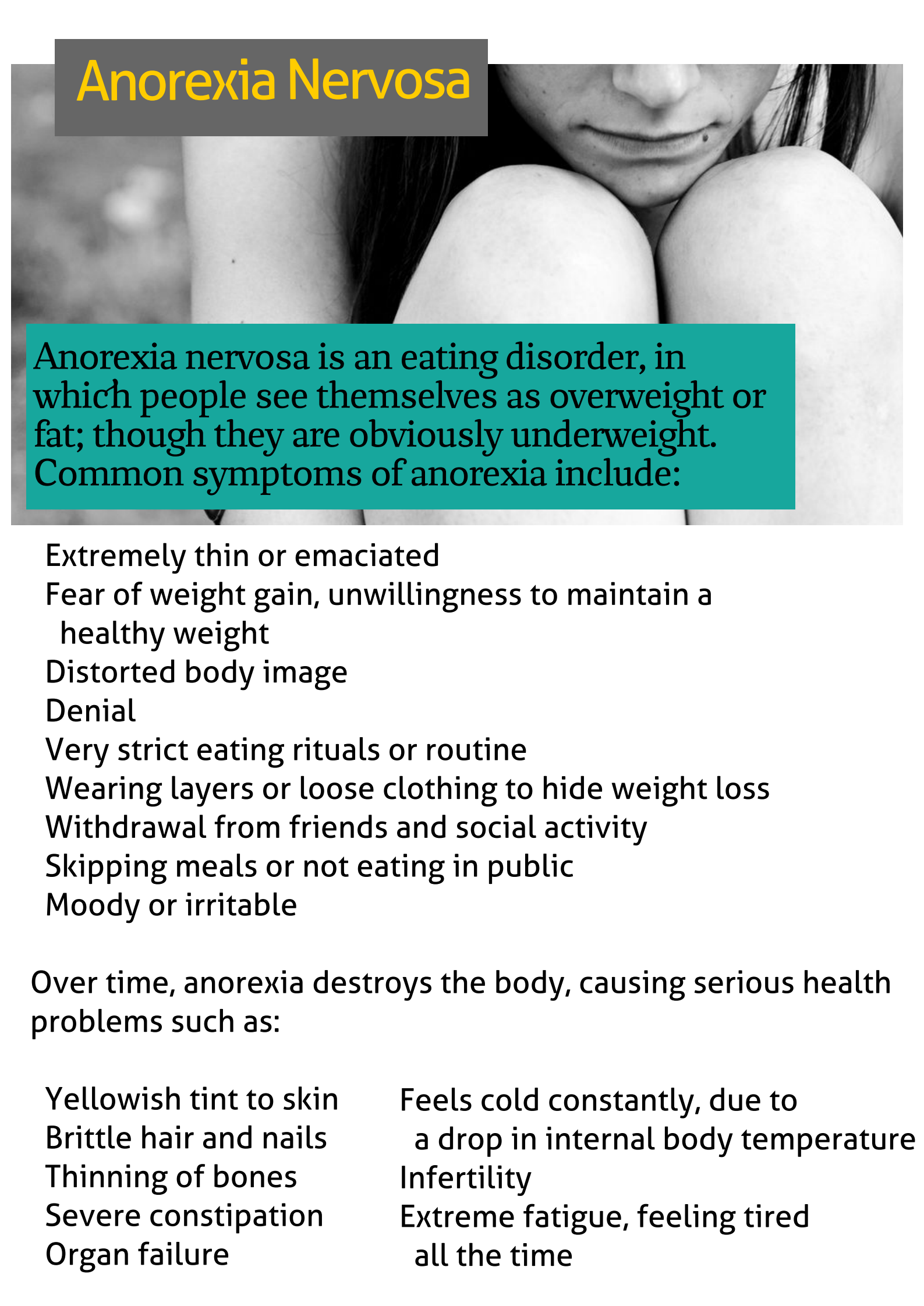
- **anorexia nervosa**
- **bulimia nervosa**
- **binge-eating**

Other types of eating disorders may include:

- **compulsive overeating**
- **food addiction**
- **body dysmorphia and other body image disorders**

While each eating disorder is distinctive, there are areas of overlapping causes and issues that trigger eating disorders.

Anorexia Nervosa



Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder, in which people see themselves as overweight or fat; though they are obviously underweight. Common symptoms of anorexia include:

Extremely thin or emaciated

Fear of weight gain, unwillingness to maintain a healthy weight

Distorted body image

Denial

Very strict eating rituals or routine

Wearing layers or loose clothing to hide weight loss

Withdrawal from friends and social activity

Skipping meals or not eating in public

Moody or irritable

Over time, anorexia destroys the body, causing serious health problems such as:

Yellowish tint to skin

Brittle hair and nails

Thinning of bones

Severe constipation

Organ failure

Feels cold constantly, due to

a drop in internal body temperature

Infertility

Extreme fatigue, feeling tired

all the time

Bulimia Nervosa

Bulimia is characterized by recurring, frequent episodes of eating large amounts of food, resulting in a lack of control over these episodes. After binge-eating, the person will feel guilty or shameful and try to compensate for

overeating by purging or vomiting, using laxatives, exercising excessively, fasting or a combination of these. People struggling with bulimia can be a bit harder to detect, as they usually have a healthy body weight or may be overweight, unlike those struggling with anorexia. Other symptoms include:



- Spending time alone or in the bathroom during or after eating
- Eating to the point of discomfort
- Negative body image
- Sore throat or swollen salivary glands
- Decaying teeth and tooth enamel due to stomach acid
- Gastrointestinal issues such as acid reflux
- Intestinal problems due to laxative abuse
- Severe dehydration
- An electrolyte imbalance, which can lead to a heart attack

Binge Eating

Binge-eating happens when someone loses control over his or her eating habits and consumes a large amount of food. Unlike bulimia, a person binge-eating does not try to purge or compensate for overeating. After binge-eating, feelings of shame and guilt set in; these feelings can trigger another episode. Symptoms include:

Eating to the point of discomfort

Obesity or weight issues

High risk for cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure

Feelings of depression or disgust over binge-eating



Compulsive Overeating

& Food Addiction

Compulsive overeating can also be characterized as a food addiction. To the food addict, eating becomes a way to hide from or manage emotions, to fill a void inside, or to cope with daily stress. In essence, a compulsive overeater seeks emotional comfort in food.



A person with compulsive overeating disorder will tend to be overweight, and is usually aware that their eating habits are abnormal. Words like, “just go on a diet” can be emotionally devastating to a person suffering from compulsive overeating, as it is not so much an issue with food consumption as with methods of living life on life’s terms and healthfully coping with emotional stresses.

Symptoms of compulsive overeating include:

- binge eating, or eating uncontrollably even when not physically hungry
- eating alone due to shame and embarrassment
- preoccupation with body weight
- depression or mood swings
- eating little in public, but maintaining a high body weight
- hiding food in strange places (closets, cabinets, suitcases, under the bed)
- self-defeating statements after food consumption
- holding the belief that food is their only friend



Compulsive overeating puts a person on a dangerous cycle. They often feel guilty for being overweight and generally have a very low self-esteem, so they use food in an effort to cope with these feelings, which only perpetuates the cycle of feeling these emotions and trying to find a way to cope again.



GETTING HELP

If you are dealing with an eating disorder, it's important to **SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY** to stop further damaging your body. Eating disorders can easily take over your life and be fatal. However, there are loving family members, friends, doctors and counselors to help you overcome eating disorders and live a healthy life. The key is getting help now! Here are a few first steps towards seeking help:



Talk with someone you trust.

Talk with a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, counselor or friend about your struggle with an eating disorder. Checkout tips for talking with others about eating disorders later in this eBook.



Connect with a counselor or doctor.

Eating disorders are considered serious health issues and should be addressed immediately with a healthcare professional, such as your doctor, school counselor or therapist. Make an appointment today to get help! If you need help finding a treatment program, counselor, or support group, you can search here: <https://cedcn.org/>.



Get help through TheHopeLine partners and resources:

Resources

Finding Balance

Blogs and stories regarding eating disorders

If you think
you might be
struggling
with an eating
disorder, take
Finding
Balance's
Quiz below to
test yourself.

Eating Issues Check In





TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT EATING DISORDERS WITH OTHERS

The first step in dealing with an eating disorder is often sharing the struggle with a friend or family member you trust. Keep these tips in mind when planning to talk to someone about eating disorders:

Find someone you trust who will listen and support you, such as a close friend, family member, school counselor or religious leader. There are people who care about you and want to help.

Set aside a specific time and location where you feel comfortable opening up about your struggle with an eating disorder. Avoid loud, crowded places where it can be impersonal and hard to listen. Choose somewhere quiet with some privacy.

Give that person time to process everything. It may come as a surprise to them and reactions could be shock or fear out of concern for you.

Let them know specifically how they can help, from coming to the counselor or doctor's appointment with you to being available when you're struggling.

Give them **this Guide** to help them understand eating disorders and how to help.



HOW TO HELP A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER WITH AN EATING DISORDER

Many people dealing with eating disorders don't want to seek treatment or are in denial about the severity of their problem. Sometimes just letting him or her know you care or have concerns about their eating behavior or body image can help that person feel safe and open up. Here are other ways you can help:

Learn about eating disorders.

There are many resources available to learn about eating disorders, why it happens and how to help your friend or loved one recover. Be sure to read over [this Guide](#), especially the “**Getting Help**” section.

Don't be judgmental.

For someone who deals with an eating disorder, opening up to someone is a big step. He or she felt you were trustworthy and is reaching out to you for help. Try to understand where they are coming from and not judge or get upset.

Let him or her know you care.

An eating disorder is a symptom of an underlying issue and your friend or loved one is choosing to share their personal problems with you. Let him or her know you are there to confide in and care deeply about their struggle.

Offer support and express your concern.

There are many ways you can help! From offering to go to counseling with him or her to being supportive with healthy eating habits, being a friend is key. Let him or her know you are concerned and keep in regular contact.

Encourage them to talk to a professional.

Eating disorders should not be taken lightly. A counselor or professional trained in dealing with eating disorders and other issues can help your friend or loved one get healthy again.

Take care of yourself.

If you feel scared or overwhelmed in helping your friend or loved one through his or her recovery process, talk with someone you trust. Remember that you need to continue to be emotionally healthy in order to help others.

BODY IMAGE



TV shows, movies, magazines and other media outlets glorify a particular body image that is unattainable, even by most models and movie stars. Almost all photos and magazine covers have been highly retouched in programs like Photoshop--even the models don't look "perfect" in real life. The fact is this: there is no "perfect" body or body type.

Check out this video by Dove: **Evolution of a Model.** You can see how much retouching it takes to make a model "*beautiful.*"



»»» Stop comparing yourself to others.

Instead of focusing on what you don't like about your body, focus on what you do like. Remember: what you see on television, the internet or in magazines is rarely ever reality. Don't let other people define what is beautiful!

»»» Strive to be healthy.

Rather than aiming for "skinny," "muscular" or obsessing over a certain body type, develop a balanced, healthy lifestyle. Try meeting with a nutritionist to help you stay accountable with eating choices and exercise.

»»» Unplug from media more often.

Teens and young adults, especially women, who consume more mainstream media, place a greater importance on sexiness and overall appearance than those who don't. So, try unplugging from negative influences for a while to help change your perspective!



A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE ON EATING DISORDERS

As we've explored in this eBook, eating disorders are serious and shouldn't be ignored. Eating disorders present a very real danger to your health. At the most basic level, eating disorders are often one person's attempt to cope with emotional, physical or spiritual pain. While you may feel an eating disorder is a way to cope with a distorted body image or emotional situation, it is unhealthy and doesn't address the real issue. That's why it's important to get help and encouragement from friends, family, counselors and others who can help.

Here at TheHopeLine, we truly care about you and want to help you overcome your struggle. Part of recovery is

addressing the spiritual pain you may be experiencing.

A belief in God and a saving relationship with Jesus makes you a new creation; one whose sins and mistakes are paid for on the cross.

While this may be hard to understand at first, it does not change the fact that God loves you so much that he sacrificed His Son, Jesus on the cross and raised him from the dead. The scars on Jesus' hands, feet, side and head attest to His love for you and how much He desires to have a relationship with you.

Having that saving relationship with Jesus does not necessarily mean that things will immediately get better. But you can take comfort in knowing that God will never leave you or abandon you.

In fact, Jesus came so that you can have real and eternal life, more and better than you ever dreamed. Furthermore, you can have assurance in knowing that you can do anything, even recover from years, months, or days struggling with an eating disorder through Christ who fills you with strength.

If you are struggling with an eating disorder and want to talk to someone, you can chat with a HopeCoach any evening. It's free and confidential.

[Chat with a HopeCoach](#)

Verses of Hope for Eating Disorders

To find more of TheHopeLine's
Guides, on Anxiety, Self-Worth,
Suicide, Self-Harm, Cheating, Lying,
and more visit us at:

[http://www.thehopeline.com/
guides/](http://www.thehopeline.com/guides/)

**If you have found this Guide helpful, please
help us get our Guides into the hands of
others by donating [HERE](#).**

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