



/ RECOGNIZE

- Keep an eye out for teens whose focus and conversation keep going back to their body, appearance and weight. You might see them doing excessive amounts of exercise or obsessing about food, calories or nutrition.
- Disordered eating is an outward manifestation of inner pain. It is an attempt to find some control in a world that feels full of anxiety, uncertainty and powerlessness.
- Behaviours may include any extreme weight control behaviour such as dieting, bingeing & purging, skipping meals, hiding food, under-eating, over-eating, or excessively exercising.
- Disordered eating can lead to heart problems, kidney damage, reproductive issues, memory loss, and death

/// RESPOND

- Recovering from disordered eating is a long and difficult path. Those who have walked this road say that it involves making major changes in patterns of eating and activities around food, walking away from weight control methods, viewing their bodies differently, and learning how to embrace and express their emotions in healthy ways. This does not happen overnight and definitely doesn't happen because someone in their world forces these changes on them. So how do we step in?

- 1. Be gentle but direct in discussing your concerns:** Tell them what you've seen and that you suspect they have some deep feelings stuck inside. Let them know their feelings matter and you want to help them find help for their hurts.
- 2. Find a team:** It will take a wider community of professionals to assist the teen through healing and coming to health—including a doctor who understands disordered eating (not all do), a counsellor, and supportive friends. Work with their parents to help create the team.
- 3. Don't over simplify:** disordered eating is not the same as other addictive behaviours and it's not a simple change of behaviour that is needed.
- 4. Don't be judgemental,** or tell a teen that disordered eating is 'sick' or 'unnecessary' or 'self-destructive'.
- 5. Don't be caught by the behaviours:** keep the focus on the reality of their inner pain.
- 6. Don't give 'advice'** on better eating or exercise habits, your job is support not diagnosis or treatment.

// REMEMBER

- Psalm 139: 14: "I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works. And my soul knows it very well."
- If you are hurting yourself to change how you look, you aren't seeing yourself as God sees you. Try to help youth understand how God sees them—as worthy of love!
- Gratitude and thankfulness play important roles in the lives of those suffering. Being gracious and showing gratitude helps to take the focus off you and onto someone or something else. This helps the youth to think/be more positive which can be influential in changing the unhealthy patterns in their life.

//// RESOURCES

- <http://www.lookingglassbc.com/hand-in-hand/>: The only non-profit in Canada offering these services, including residential treatment, as well as face to face online counselling
- keltyeatingdisorders.ca: A great overview info to help understand the complexity of the issue
- <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/stories-of-hope>: A whole lot of real-people encouragement for the journey