



# **Eating Disorders - Symptoms of Distress**

Part 6

Information for Young  
People

***Norfolk Eating  
Disorders Association***

### **Did You Know??????**

The term Eating Disorders includes Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa and Compulsive, or Binge Eating, Disorder.

### **Did You Know??????**

Eating Disorders are not digestive problems - like irritable bowel syndrome - or food phobias, allergies, or related illnesses like diabetes, or obesity. But, people with these problems may also have an eating disorder.

### **Did You Know??????**

Most people abuse food (and/or drink) in some way at some time - Christmas dinners, Easter eggs, Birthdays, night out with your mates. **BUT**, for most people it doesn't become a problem.

### **Did You Know??????**

Problems begin when you use food to help you cope in a difficult or painful situation where you feel powerless. Problems begin when it becomes "the answer" or the way to relieve stress. instead of looking at and solving what has really gone wrong.

Although this may be some way away from a full-blown eating disorder, in the beginning...is

***The Grey Area***

## What on earth is The Grey Area?

# The Grey Area

First there is whatever is

**“NORMAL” - for you.**

This may include:

- You know when you are physically hungry, and that's when you eat.
- You only think about food and eating when you **are** hungry and, after a meal, forget about it.
- You stop when, or before, you are full.
- You enjoy your food, have likes and dislikes, some things upset you, so you don't eat them. It's not really that important - "take it or leave it."
- Sometimes, you over-indulge, like everyone else

Then there is *Grey*

- You may use food in various ways, but your behaviour never becomes extreme.
- It may not be noticeable to others - unless you nick someone else's chocolate or you have mood swings.
- You may not be totally obsessive around food, looks or self-worth.

Sometimes this “Grey Area” is one that people pass through on the way to a full-blown eating disorder.

Or sometimes the “Grey Area” becomes a way of living over many years.

Because it is more subtle than a full eating disorder, you are not “in denial” of the situation. You just don't realise that this is a "problem area."

It never becomes extreme... It is unlikely to be picked up by a doctor.....

# The Grey Area

## Q & A

**Q** If it's not bad enough for a doctor to pick it up, why is the "grey area" a problem?

**A** **Because people are happier if they face up to and sort out their problems instead of turning to food to block them out.**

**Q** Some of my friends take drugs, others get drunk. Using food must be better than that - so why bother to change?

**A** **It is more difficult to sort out problems around food. You can avoid drink and drugs, but you can't live without food.**

**Q** But if it stays like that it's not going to do anyone any harm including me. So why worry?

**A** **A full blown eating disorders can develop from this "grey area" that is a sign that your life is not as happy and sorted as it could be. You don't need to stay unhappy.**

**Q** I felt really stupid when I had a row with my friend and I went home and ate all the chocolates that were left in the box. And they were ALL ones that I'd left because I hate them. I felt really sick. Is that the "grey area?"

**A** **Yes. When your self-esteem was low you went onto "automatic" around food and ended up punishing yourself.**

**Q** I was so worried when my exams were coming up that I couldn't eat. Everyone said I looked great because I lost weight. So that's good isn't it?

**A** **Not if this unexpected bonus becomes your answer for coping with times when you are worried. Denying your body the nourishment it needs will not help you to think clearly and sort out problems in the way you need to do.**

**Q** I'm a vegetarian. That's not a problem is it?

**A** **Not if you eat the right combination of foods to give your body what it needs, and don't just use it as an excuse to avoid "fattening" foods.**

## TRIGGERS

Things that start people off using food to compensate for difficulties include:

Moving House or School  
Bullying  
Abuse  
Bereavement  
Parents' Divorce

**These are all things that make you doubt yourself, your ability and self-worth. Food becomes your comfort and your punishment.**

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

**How would you know if someone was starting to rely on food in stressful times?**

**Well, you might not spot it at all, but some of these may become more evident over time:**

tired  
irritability  
depression  
mood swings  
low self esteem  
personality changes  
disappears after meals  
excessive exercise  
perfectionism  
can't sleep  
**ANGER**  
secretive  
deceptive  
may be isolated  
loss of confidence  
confused and unhappy

**OBSESSED ABOUT FOOD**

# The Grey Area

## Myths & Facts

*Myth - Eating disorders only happen to spoiled girls with nothing better to do than worry about their appearance.*

**Fact - Eating disorders can affect men and women of any age, social, ethnic or economic group.**

*Myth - People who exercise a lot are really healthy.*

**Fact - Exercise is good in moderation. Some people exercise a lot because they are obsessed, and exercise becomes part of their eating disorder.**

*Myth - But athletes, dancers, gymnasts and other sports people can't have a problem.*

**Fact - Many people in these areas do admit to having an eating disorder at some time in their lives.**

*Myth - I can't face eating first thing in the morning and breakfast isn't necessary anyway.*

**Fact - If you eat breakfast your body will not be craving for carbohydrate and you will find it easier to plan and control your meals.**

*Myth - Weight control is easy. To gain weight you just eat more, to lose weight you just eat less.*

**Fact - Diets don't work in the long term. In order to solve weight problems a whole change of life-style may be the only effective way. This will include, eating patterns, exercise, spirituality, and sorting out emotional and psychological problems, learning to accept yourself as you are.**



# The Grey Area

## Myths & Facts

*Myth - The media is to blame for eating disorders.*

**Fact - The media bears some responsibility for promoting society's emphasis on the thin ideal but there are other factors involved.**

*Myth - I am a hateful person, I am to blame for my eating disorder.*

**Fact - You are a person of low self-esteem who is using an eating disorder in order to struggle with painful situations the best way you know how. Blame doesn't come into it.**

*Myth - Magazines are to blame because of all the recipes and adverts for food next to diets. It isn't fair.*

**Fact - Those who edit magazines do share part of the responsibility for much of society's attitudes. However, they print what people want to read, and cover a wide range of interests. But we are each responsible for what we choose to read, buy, and eat.**

*Myth - Parents are to blame for eating disorders.*

**Fact - They are not to blame. Family life influences each one of us, but the way we respond to such experiences and examples is each individual's responsibility.**

*Myth - People who sit at home and stuff themselves in the evening are greedy and lazy.*

**Fact - It is harder for people to keep difficult and painful feelings at bay when they are alone, especially when it gets dark. For some people, food helps, briefly.**



# ANOREXIA NERVOSA

## **Did You Know??????**

The first person to be told they had Anorexia Nervosa lived over 100 years ago, but the illness was known long before that.

It was probably around in most of the history you study.

**WOW!!!!!!!!!!**

## **And Did You Know??????**

Anorexia Nervosa isn't really about food – it's about self-esteem and power.

People with anorexia feel everything is out of control, they are weak and don't deserve to take up space – they HATE themselves. What they think is “The less there is of me, the less there is to hate.” So they try to Shrink.

**Shrink?????**

## **BUT - Did You Know????**

When people with Anorexia Nervosa THINK they have got back in control of their lives, the illness has taken control of **THEM** and **THEY CAN'T STOP LOSING WEIGHT.**

**HELP!!**

By then, no weight feels low enough to be safe.

**Scary.....**



## So What Causes Eating Disorders?

# ANOREXIA NERVOSA

No-one knows for sure, but it seems to be:

**personality**  
"it's in your genes"  
+ **family influence**  
(your "upbringing")  
+ **social pressures**  
(media, your friends etc.)  
= **eating disorders** - in which your self-esteem is related to your weight and shape

**Olé!**

**BUT**, we can all **CHOOSE** how we respond to each of these factors, and our **CHOICE** will affect the result.

However, eating disorders are also about

### **ACHIEVEMENT-**

People with anorexia usually set very high standards for themselves –

**Career**

**Academic**

**Relationships**

**EVERYTHING!!!**

**BUT...** With such high standards, they are **DOOMED** to fail at some stage –

The more pressured they feel:  
the more weight they want to lose - because

**OH NO!!!**

**exams & dates & jobs & parties & sex & love & clothes & money & FOOD FOOD FOOD FOOD FOOD**

they feel that is  
**ACHIEVEMENT!**

**TA DAH!**

# ANOREXIA NERVOSA

## Q & A

**Q** I get stressed too – why don't I have an eating disorder?

**A** **Your personality deals with stress in different ways – think about how you feel and what you do when you're stressed.**

**Q** My mum eats all the time and my sister is anorexic. What's going on?

**A** **They may both be using food in different ways to cope with problems, and each have an eating disorder.**

**Q** My sister has anorexia but I don't. Why not – we were brought up together?

**A** **You are a different mix of experiences, genetic and personality factors, and just respond in a different way.**

**Q** My brother's really thin and works out all the time. He thinks he's fat, but only girls have eating disorders so what's his problem?

**A** **Boys do get eating disorders as well, and too much exercise is often part of this.**

**Q** I puke after I eat. It's not a problem. Why all the fuss about eating disorders?

**A** **Your body needs proper nourishment. Any eating disorder will affect your health and the way you grow. Also, the eating disorder stops you sorting out your real problems. So, you stay unhappy, get unhealthy, and don't achieve what you want to do or be.**

**Q** Can I recover from my eating disorder?

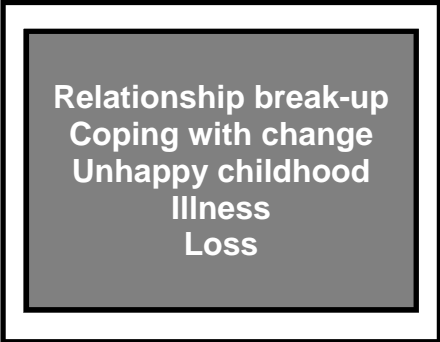
**A** **Yes!**



# ANOREXIA NERVOSA

## TRIGGERS

You don't catch eating disorders like you catch a cold, but some things can set them off – like:



Relationship break-up  
Coping with change  
Unhappy childhood  
Illness  
Loss

**These and other factors may be too painful to think about, so eating problems distract everyone from looking at what is really going on.**

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

How would you know if someone had anorexia nervosa? They might show signs listed in the previous section and/or some of these:

Cold  
Perfectionism  
Loss of periods  
Low self-esteem  
Tired all the time  
Obsessive-compulsive  
Rapid, extreme weight loss  
Restless, searching, agitated  
Very thin, but think they are fat  
Downey hair on face and body  
Yo-Yo dieting and weight fluctuation

**But remember -** signs and symptoms of eating disorders are not mutually exclusive. There are many feelings, physical and psychological effects common to all the illnesses.

# ANOREXIA NERVOSA

## Myths & Facts

*Myth - Eating 600 calories per day is more than enough.*

**Fact - The body when resting needs around 1200 calories per day to keep the brain, heart, lungs etc working properly. If exercise is taken, more calories are needed.**

*Myth - People with anorexia nervosa are not interested in food.*

**Fact - People with anorexia are obsessed with thoughts of food and often go into catering as a career.**

*Myth - People don't really recover from an eating disorder. Anorexia is always there, the illness can only be managed.*

**Fact - People can and do fully recover from eating disorders, but only if they are able to find more healthy ways of coping.**

*Myth - If you're anorexic, gaining weight is easy -you just eat more.*

**Fact - It takes 3000 calories or more per day to gain 1kg per week. This is direst agony for someone with anorexia.**

*Myth - I could do with a bit of anorexia - I'm far too fat.*

**Fact - Anorexia nervosa is not about desirable self-control around eating and weight adjustment. It is a life-threatening illness that is out of control.**

*Myth - Being fat is worse for you than being anorexic.*

**Fact - This is debatable, but people do die of eating disorders, from obesity and/or excessively low weight. The effects of yo-yo weight loss and gain from on-off dieting can also be harmful.**

*Myth - She's reached her goal weight so she must be better.*

**Fact - Anorexia is not just about weight. She could still be very ill indeed, and feel worse about herself than when she was at a very low weight.**

*Myth - People with anorexia nervosa have just lost their appetite for food.*

**Fact - People with anorexia nervosa have become unable to give in to their appetite and eat to nourish themselves.**

*Myth - People with anorexia are in control of the illness and can choose to stop.*

**Fact - Recovering from anorexia nervosa is very hard. Chemical effects of starvation on the brain mean decision making and change are very difficult. It is the illness that takes control of the person.**

*Myth - Anorexia only affects young, middle or upper class girls.*

**Fact - Anorexia nervosa can affect men and women, boys and girls, of any age, race, or social class.**

*Myth - Anorexia nervosa is a "slimmer's disease".*

**Fact - Anorexia nervosa may be triggered by someone going on a diet, but is not just about losing weight**

*Myth - Fat is bad for you.*

**Fact - Some proportion of fat in the diet is essential for health.**

# BULIMIA NERVOSA

## **Did You Know??????**

Bulimia Nervosa was named as an illness separate from anorexia in 1979, but may have been around in Ancient Rome.

*What???*

## **And Did You Know?????**

People with Bulimia Nervosa may eat many thousands of calories in a single binge.

*How many?????*

## **So Did You Know?????**

Bulimia Nervosa can affect men and women of any age, race or background.

*Ooh La La!!*

## **But Did You Know?????**

A person may have Bulimia Nervosa for many years without anyone knowing - on the outside they may seem very confident and successful, but inside they are desperately unhappy.

**HELP!!!!**

# BULIMIA NERVOSA

## So what is this Bulimia Nervosa?

**IT IS** a pattern of bingeing and vomiting where the person feels out of control and unable to stop.

**IT IS** used to numb painful feelings and take the focus off problems.

**IT IS** sometimes the body's rebellion against the starving pattern of anorexia.

**IT IS** done by people who feel self-hatred, self-disgust, low self-esteem and who may be depressed.

**IT IS** a very secret illness and may not involve much weight change - in fact, many people with bulimia look "normal".

**IT IS** a response to stress and unhappiness.

**IT IS** also a combination of the type of person you are, your family life, and the social pressures of living in the 21st century.

**IT IS** an illness that affects both men and women of all ages, races and social groups.

**IT IS** an illness which can cause great damage to the body, and can lead to debt because of the amount of money spent on binge food.

# BULIMIA NERVOSA

## Q & A

**Q** My friend is bulimic and her face looks like a hamster's. Why?

**A** **If people vomit a lot, their salivary glands may become blocked, infected and swollen.**

**Q** If you can't tell that someone has bulimia why is it a problem?

**A** **The cycle of bingeing and vomiting robs the body of the nourishment it needs to grow and function properly.**

**Q** Why do people eat huge amounts when they are not hungry?

**A** **These binges happen when people use food in an attempt to feed emotional hunger.**

**Q** Do boys get bulimia as well?

**A** **Yes, boys and men may also suffer from bulimia.**

**Q** I was sick when I had gastric flu. It was vile. Why would someone choose to be sick so often?

**A** **During a binge, people feel out of control and panicky, so the food becomes something horrible once eaten. By vomiting they hope to achieve complete emptiness and feel "pure" inside.**

**Q** That's stupid. Why don't they just stop eating?

**A** **Some scientists think that a faulty gene may prevent the "full" message getting from the stomach to the brain. Loss of control is a symptom of the illness. If this is the case, it is only one piece of the complex eating disorders jigsaw.**

**Q** I've had bulimia for two years. I can't imagine life without it. Can I really recover? I have tried.

**A** **YES!!!  
With help you can recover.**



# BULIMIA NERVOSA

## TRIGGERS

Bulimia nervosa may be set off by the same sort of situations that trigger anorexia nervosa

Exam pressures  
Being teased  
Violent relationships  
Family problems  
Pressure of work

It has the same purpose, to take the focus off the real problem.

Social pressures such as -

Success  
Appearance  
Eating & Drinking  
Achievement  
Glamour

make people afraid to show that they are unhappy or that something is wrong with

Bulimia is a very hidden, secret, lonely illness.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Bulimia is difficult to spot as sufferers can seem to be happy and confident. Extremes of weight are not usually a factor.

These may be some of the signs, some you will recognise from the other sections:

weight fluctuation

loss of periods

tooth decay

self harm

calluses on knuckles

### ANGER

irritability

depression

mood swings

out of control

low self esteem

personality changes

disappears after meals

excessive exercise

food disappears

debt

tired

secretive

deceptive

may be isolated

PREOCCUPATION WITH

**FOOD**

*Myth - It's all about self-control. People can stop bingeing and vomiting if they really want to.*

**Fact - Some people can and do stop by themselves. Most need help to break the bulimic habit.**

*Myth - Bulimia is a myth invented by spoilt middle or upper class girls.*

**Fact - Bulimia can affect both males and females of most ages and all ethnic and social groups. It is a diagnosable illness.**

*Myth - Bulimia is easier to stop than alcohol abuse as it's not addictive.*

**Fact – Bulimia is a kind of addiction, causing similar chemical reactions. Alcohol can be avoided. Food is necessary for life and can't be avoided, that makes the habit harder, not easier to stop.**

*Myth - The bulimic eating pattern is not a problem if weight is normal.*

**Fact - Bingeing and vomiting cause physical and mental health problems. It also has social, and sometimes criminal, implications if people steal for binges.**

*Myth - Once a bulimic, always a bulimic. It is impossible to recover from bulimia.*

**Fact - With the right kind of help, therapy and support, and a lot of determination, people can and do recover from bulimia even after many years of suffering.**

*Myth - I can't stop taking laxatives. I get really bugged up and my legs and feet swell if I do.*

**Fact - Eating the right kind of foods - with enough fibre, fruit and vegetables - and drinking plenty of fluid - especially water - will help your body to adjust. It will take time for everything to work properly again.**

*Myth - If I eat normally I will keep gaining weight. It will go out of control.*

**Fact - Your body weight will take a while to stabilise after chaotic eating. A lot of the weight gained will be fluid to correct the dehydration due to vomiting.**

*Myth - If weight is within a normal range, it doesn't matter if it goes up and down.*

**Fact - Repeated weight change can damage the heart. Weight is often regained as fat which replaces lost muscle tissue. This upsets the body composition.**

*Myth - Bulimia gets rid of fat.*

**Fact - Bulimia robs your body of fluid and the essential minerals it contains. The weight that is lost is fluid, not fat.**

*Myth - I am disgusting and worthless. I am so weak I don't deserve to recover.*

**Fact - You are a strong and loveable person who is using bulimia to hang on to life and sanity despite the pain.**

# COMPULSIVE EATING

## Did You Know??????

There are more people who struggle with the problem of Compulsive Eating than the sum of those people who have anorexia and/or bulimia nervosa.

How many???

## And Did You Know????

Many people suffer from all three types of eating disorder at different stages of their illness. Some will go from extreme Compulsive Eating to extreme anorexia - or vice-versa.

What?????

## So Did You Know?????

The pains and problems, self-hatred and self-doubt behind anorexia and bulimia are also felt by people who are trapped in Compulsive Eating habits.

*"Oh no, but you  
always  
look so jolly!"*

**HELP!!**

# COMPULSIVE EATING

So what's behind  
Compulsive Eating?

Well, pretty much the same things that are behind  
anorexia and bulimia. It's about things like

**POWER** **IDENTITY**  
**LOVE** **ANGER**

and other **BIG** issues that

all get tangled up together.

**BUT.....**

One main difference between Bulimia Nervosa and  
Compulsive Eating is that the people who binge do  
not, or cannot vomit.

So!

They stay trapped in their feelings of panic and  
loss of control. They may also gain a huge  
amount of weight.

**FOOD**

becomes the main focus of all life events – the  
good, the bad and the ugly

# COMPULSIVE EATING



**Q** Surely you're not saying "compulsive eating" is an actual illness?

**A** Yes, it is called "Binge Eating Disorder" by doctors.

**Q** Are all fat people compulsive eaters?

**A** No. Obesity is a separate problem from compulsive eating, but is sometimes a result of this illness.

**Q** Since when?

**A** It has been in the official books since 1996 as a newly accepted illness, currently being researched.

**Q** Which is worse, being too fat or too thin?

**A** Either may carry health risks, depending on the individual. Weight is not the only consideration involved.

**Q** What's the difference between compulsive eating and being greedy?

**A** Most people are "greedy" about things they enjoy from time to time. But compulsive eating is not about enjoyment

**Q** Do men get this or is it all about PMT?

**A** Men do also suffer from compulsive eating. About 10% of people with anorexia or bulimia will be men, the proportion of male compulsive eaters is thought to be higher. In women, it may also be connected with PMT.

**Q** I know I eat a lot more in the winter. Why is this?

**A** A condition known as Seasonal Binge Eating is thought to be connected with low light levels.

**Q** If it's a compulsion, can people stop it?

**A** Yes!  
With help and understanding.



# COMPULSIVE EATING

## TRIGGERS

All eating disorders may be set off by similar events, so the triggers for compulsive eating will include:

If food is linked with happier

Feeling sad or unhappy  
Under pressure  
Work problems  
Loneliness  
Anger and Frustration

days,  
people may “comfort eat”  
in times of stress.

Social pressures around  
weight and eating bring  
sufferers feelings of:

**And, each time these**

Weakness  
Disgust  
Failure  
Stupidity

feelings arise, an eating  
bout could be triggered.  
It is a downward spiral of  
self-hatred.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Compulsive eating is not always an obvious condition to identify.

Signs may include many of those already mentioned including:

**Tired**

**Panic attacks**

**Out of control**

**Low self-esteem**

**FOOD DISAPPEARS**

**Confused and unhappy**

**EVERYTHING REVOLVES AROUND**

**FOOD**

**Secretive, deceptive, isolated**

**BUSY BUSY BUSY BUSY**

**WEIGHT GAIN**

**Erratic periods**

**Yo-Yo dieting**

**Depression**

**Irritability**

**Anger**

**DESPERATION**

# COMPULSIVE EATING

## *Myths & Facts*

*Myth - Fat people are stupid lazy, and unhealthy.*

**Fact - Excess weight has not been linked with impaired brain function in an otherwise healthy person, but lack of nourishment -perhaps through dieting –has been found to slow down mental processes during exams. A 1999 documentary on “Fat” featured sportsmen who are at peak fitness although far above an “ideal” weight.**

*Myth - All fat children need to lose weight.*

**Fact - Children grow at different rates and most will achieve their ideal weight naturally if healthy and eating a diet adequate for their needs.**

*Myth - Obesity is an eating disorder*

**Fact - Clinical obesity is a medical condition that may or may not result from an eating disorder. Sometimes an eating disorder may develop out of efforts made to reduce weight from a state of obesity.**

*Myth - All compulsive eaters are very fat.*

**Fact - People who use food in this way may be of any size, depending on their individual metabolism - how quickly food is converted into energy instead of being stored as fat.**

*Myth - Fat people are happy and jolly.*

**Fact - Many people with problems around weight and eating suffer from depression. An added factor is that some anti-depressants and other medications cause weight gain, which is a vicious circle, making the problems worse.**

*Myth - It is always more healthy to be underweight than overweight.*

**Fact - Low weight that is the result of not nourishing your body properly is not healthy, nor is weight that goes up and down through yo-yo dieting. Both of these are more dangerous than maintaining a weight moderately above the accepted “normal” range.**

*Myth - Compulsive eaters are just weak-willed.*

**Fact – Compulsive eaters may be very strong-willed and powerful people. But they lose control around food during their episodes of bingeing.**

*Myth - Compulsive eaters don't care about their size and how they look the way that people with anorexia or bulimia do.*

**Fact - Self-disgust about weight and shape causes intense pain and despair for people who are compulsive eaters.**

*For instance.....*

Your Nan dies and you go to her funeral. You really loved her and are shocked at how tiny her coffin looks on the stand. You look round at your family and all the women are smaller than you. Suddenly you feel like an alien and as though the only person who really loved you for yourself and thought you were wonderful has gone.

After the funeral, everyone is tucking in to the food and you feel disgusted -with them for not caring, and with yourself for wanting to eat, but feeling it's wrong to do so.

There's no-one you can talk to, because they all think you're too fat anyway. You won't have any food because you don't deserve it. You hold off until you are so hungry that you finish off the left-overs in the kitchen. Your uncle sees you and makes a joke at your expense and hugs you in a way you don't like, but can't say. You feel panicky and confused, so you excuse yourself and rush to the loo where you're sick, and then you feel better. At the next family gathering you remember...

## Storytime

*For instance.....*

*You're given a box of Quality Street for Christmas and there's only one type you like in it, so you eat those. After you have had a row -at work, at home, anywhere - you sit and eat the rest of the box.*

*While doing so you think of all the things you should have said, or wish you hadn't said, hate the chocolates, hate yourself, hate everybody else and end up feeling really sick. As a result you may or may not actually be sick, but, whatever, you feel stupid, your self-esteem is low and you feel worse than you did before you started eating them.*

*This happens again from time to time...*

*For instance.....*

You are really worried about something - the family dog needs an operation, your mocks are a week away, you're short of money and it's your best friend's birthday - you feel powerless, your stomach churns and you don't feel like eating, so you don't. You get to the stage where you feel sick because you are so empty, but you're still worried, so you still don't feel like eating.

*For instance.....*

You're going to the pub with friends for the evening - you meet your best friend's new boyfriend for the first time. He is older than the rest of you and has a high-powered job. Your boyfriend gets on well with both of them and happily joins in the work talk, but you feel increasingly stupid as the evening wears on. The other three talk and laugh together and you can't think of a thing to say. Or if you do speak, silence follows and you feel that you've lost the plot. You feel really left out and isolated.

When you get home your parents are still watching the TV and you feel you can't talk to them. You stay up, your self-esteem in a downward spiral of self-hatred, self-doubt, feeling a failure.

Later, you raid the fridge, as you have before...

Things work out OK - the dog survives, the mocks aren't as bad as you dreaded, and your money is enough for an ideal gift - **BUT**, as a result of not-eating your weight has gone down a bit and people start to say how good you look. Not-eating has brought an unexpected bonus of approval which lodges in the back of your mind, and the next time you are worried, the solution is...

**Storytime**

*For instance.....*

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥  
♥  
♥ You are in  
♥ love, you've got spots  
♥ and think she will  
♥ never look at you  
♥ because of them.  
♥ So you cut out  
♥ chocolate. Then you  
♥ cut out chips, crisps,  
♥ burgers, start looking  
♥ for "fat" or "sugar" in  
♥ everything. Friends  
♥ say you're mental,  
♥ but you get more and  
♥ more obsessed .  
♥  
♥ And when she  
♥ snubs you, it **really**  
♥ hurts. You're  
♥ useless, can't do  
♥ anything right. So  
♥ you may as well pig-  
♥ out on all the things  
♥ you'd given up, or  
♥ you may find you  
♥ can't eat them at all.  
♥ Either way, food has  
♥ a new significance for  
♥ you...  
♥  
♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

## Storytime - Extra

By the time Anna was 14 years old, she had a mother and stepfather - Bob, older sister and younger brother. When she was six, her parents had separated and later divorced. No-one really talked to Anna about what was happening, and she thought it was her fault, because she always wanted things. She wanted toys, she wanted to go to the beach, she wanted sweets and ice-creams, she wanted to be a dancer. Dad said yes, Mum said no. When they split, Anna and her brother and sister stayed with Mum. At weekends she saw Dad and he still let her have sweets and ice-creams, and took them to the beach. He liked to see her dance.

At the age of eleven Anna had already put on a lot of weight because of all the sweets and ice-creams she ate while she was with Dad at weekends, and during the week because she missed him. Then Dad married again and Anna was bridesmaid at the registry office. He talked about her as his "little ballet dancer" and everybody laughed. She overheard a couple of men being rude about her weight and laughing at how much she ate at the reception.

When Dad's tiny new baby came along he said he couldn't afford the dance lessons any more, and thought she'd outgrown them anyway. He was often busy at weekends and couldn't see his first family so much. Then Anna's Mum got married again. Bob was OK, but he wasn't Dad. Anna hated it when he got cross about her Dad letting her down and not taking her out when he said he would. Bob had no right to criticise him – Dad was

*(Continued on page 29)*

## Storytime - Extra contd.

*(Continued from page 28)*

great, she loved him. But why wasn't he with them still? Why didn't he take her out when he said he would? Why was he so busy all the time? Why didn't he love her any more? She was so unhappy – and she desperately wanted to be happy again.

One day Anna noticed that everyone she knew who looked happy was also thin. The girls she still saw from the dance class, her mother and sister, stepmother and her new step-aunt, who was a dancer, people in her favourite groups and soaps were all thin. She got so unhappy that, one day, she stuffed all the Easter eggs hidden in the wardrobe and a litre of ice-cream from the freezer. She felt so ill after it all that she made herself sick. That made her feel better but so unhappy that she didn't eat at all for the rest of the day. Everyone thought she was ill and were really nice to her. When they were asleep she raided the fridge again. She told her Mum she was on a diet, and did lose some weight, but still felt gross.

This went on until the summer when her mother caught her being sick, with all the food packs still littering the kitchen. The whole family seemed to take part in the row that followed and Anna was told she must stop such wasteful behaviour – what about all the starving people in the world?

So Anna stopped eating. She begged her Dad to pay for dance lessons again and he said he would if she lost the rest of her “puppy fat”. So Anna thought that losing her “puppy-fat” was what would make Dad love her again. She worked very hard at losing weight, she was good at it –

*(Continued on page 30)*

## Storytime - Extra contd.

*(Continued from page 29)*

better than any of her friends who were on diets. Soon Dad agreed to pay for her ballet lessons again. At Christmas she collapsed on stage during the dancing group's exhibition. Until she appeared in her dance costume nobody, including the dance teacher, had realised how much weight she had lost and how ill she had become.

In hospital she was stuffed with food so that she would put the weight back on quickly. She had to eat all the meals, and have snacks in between. If they had enough staff she was watched while she ate. If they didn't, she tried to get rid of the food until she was caught and there was a huge row. Everyone was angry with her, the hospital staff, her Mum and step-dad, brother and sister, Dad, friends. She knew she deserved it and was angry with herself, but most of all she was frightened and miserable. She was terrified of regaining all that weight. Each time she looked in the mirror a monster looked out and still they said she had to gain more. Eventually she had got to her "goal weight" and the doctor said she could go home.

Dad came and collected her. When he said "That's more like my little ballet dancer again" she didn't know what to do. Everything had been terrifying before – in hospital – and now Anna was thrown into complete confusion and desperation. *Is this the way to get my Daddy to love me again?*

And when he bought her the sweets and ice-cream...

# Norfolk EDA

- ◆ 1: Anorexia & Bulimia nervosa, Compulsive or Binge Eating. Disorder & the Grey Area

Also includes Norfolk statistics and influence of the media.

- ◆ 2: Strategies for Recovery

This is intended for people who want to work to control or overcome their eating disorder, but need some help or support at hand. May also be helpful for carers.

- ◆ 3: Help for Carers

Especially for families, friends, colleagues and employers of people with eating disorders, offering practical help and support.

- ◆ 4: Men and Eating Disorders

So much information is aimed specifically at women, men often feel it is irrelevant to them. This begins to redress the balance.

- ◆ 5: Eating Disorders and Pregnancy

Issues around fertility and pregnancy are often problem areas for women with eating disorders. This booklet looks at some of these issues.

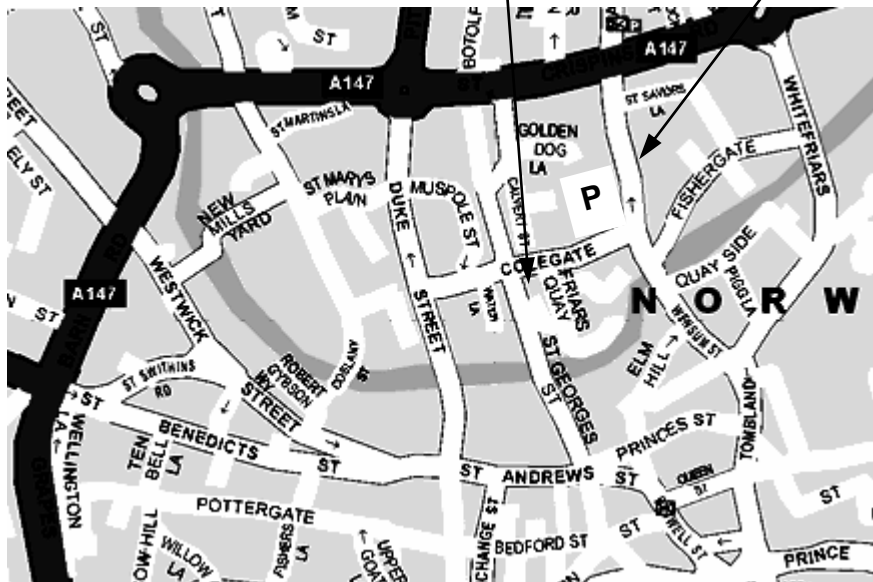
- ◆ 6: Eating Disorders - Information for Young People

Adapted from our original schools hand-out, this is aimed at young people over the age of 16 years.

To request copies of our booklets contact 01603-665974 (admin)

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