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Eating disorders

How many ads do you see each day that sell a way to achieve some sort of body image? If you watch T.V. for an hour you will on average see an average of 4 weight loss ads. In 1992 60 to 80 million people in the United States were trying to lose weight¹.

Losing weight is not a bad thing but there comes a point when the goal of losing weight crosses into unhealthy behavior. In 1996 a study showed that about one in ten high school and college students suffer from eating disorders². According to the 1996 study in a class of 30 students it would not be unlikely that three of them suffer from some type of eating disorder. Eating disorders are mental issues and cannot be linked to one specific cause; there are many things that contribute to the development of each disorder. The "ideal image" is often a major cause of eating disorders. Eating disorders can be treated and even prevented by combining support and understanding for those who suffer. It is imperative that we address this issue and do something to change the trend.

Anorexia nervosa is one type of eating disorders and is more commonly referred to simply as anorexia. The word anorexia comes from the Greek, an- means lack of and orexis means appetite the whole thing meaning lack of desire to eat. Anorexia is not exactly a valid name for the disorder most sufferers of anorexia have a great desire to eat but resist it for fear of gaining weight and or losing control. According to The Eating Disorder Source Book patients report thinking about food 70 to 85 percent of the day.

Adding nervosa to the term anorexia makes the name more appropriate. As the full term anorexia nervosa means lack of desire to eat due to mental condition. 1 to four of every 400 girls is affected by anorexia nervosa (Levine). Anorexia nervosa is diagnosed as refusal to maintain weight at the minimum for their height (85 percent less than expected weight.) along with a great fear of gaining weight or becoming, disturbance in body image (thinking they are fat even when they are extremely thin) and amenorrhea, which is the term for three consecutive missed periods due to weightⁱⁱⁱ.

Another eating disorder is Bulimia Nervosa. People with bulimia nervosa suffer reoccurring binge cycles followed by unhealthy purging or other activities to compensate for the binge eating in order to prevent weight gain. For people with bulimia binge eating is often done discreetly and makes the person feel a lack of control. (Eating disorder sourcebook)

Binge eating is defined as recurrent binges most of them done secretly eating far larger amounts than most would consume. Part of the binge is eating food much more rapidly, eating until uncomfortably full, eating large amounts when not hungry, eating alone and being disgusted with themselves.

The Ideal image is the goal look and over the years it has become incredibly thin and almost if not completely impossible to achieve. The media advertises retouched and airbrushed images as the definition of beauty. It's not hard to see why so many have issues with body image. T.V. shows like make me a super model and Americas next top model show thin tall women twice a week and each week someone gets eliminated these shows tell even beautiful people that they're not good enough. Who is good enough who is pretty enough? The dove campaign for real beauty I one of its advertises mens shows

a decent looking woman going to a photo shoot then it shows all the retouching done before her painted appearance is plastered on a billboard. Dove and other big names such as seventeen magazines have been trying to change women's body image so that women can think about themselves more positively. Dove has its campaign for real beauty and seventeen has its body peace project to inspire and support young women in pursuit of high self-esteem and more positive body image. Media plays a large part in the ideal image most people give themselves but it's not the only thing. Ordinary people in our everyday lives have effects on how we see ourselves. Stopping the media is pretty much impossible and even if we could it wouldn't accomplish anything how we define ideal image would simply change.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Losing weight is not a bad thing but doing it in a healthy way is important. Eating disorders are unhealthy and dangerous. If we wish to stop eating disorders we must stop ourselves; we must pay attention to the way we speak to each other, look at each other and way we act. Stopping to tell someone they look good or you care about them is not a difficult thing to do but even small things can make a difference. If you know someone in an eating disorder talk to them about it, you just showing that you're worried or you care could help them. Eating disorders will not go away over night and helping one person won't necessarily change the world but It is possible that you can change one person's world.

ⁱ National center for health statistics 1992

ⁱⁱ Levine M. Prevalence of eating disorders some tentative facts. EDAP. Feb 1,1996

ⁱⁱⁱ Diagnostic and statistical manual, fourth edition, 1994. American psychiatric association