

Eating Disorders & Your Image

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What is Eating Disorder?

Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling (1999) describes the effect of eating disorder as follows: “Eating disorders manifest a wide range weight and food issues experienced by both men and women. They symbolize serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences.”

Extreme focus and emphasis on physical image is an important aspect of eating disorders. Emphasis on physical appearance has always been a part of human civilization. Consider those statues, descriptions of the beauty of the body parts, cruelty, ugliness, etc., in real world and in literature. However, to take this emphasis to a disease level is now getting to be a virulent infection all over the world. India is no exception to this.

Your Image is Everything Now!

In today’s world your image seems to be everything. Instead of your image being the last deciding factor when people judge, it’s the first. Your being/soul is not considered anymore. Who you really are does not seem to matter as much as it used to.

You may be Shunned!

There is a perfect image that everyone has in their minds and if you do not meet the criteria then you are shunned. The problem is that everyone has an unrealistic, impossible figure, skin tone, etc... No one is capable of reaching this level of perfection! The closest you can get is plastic surgery which is plainly for those who have such a low self esteem and respect for their bodies that they would resort to surgery! Now I understand that there could be some cases where you need to have that done.

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More Harmful Methods to Improve Your Image

Image Is Everything is a major misconception in our society and all around the world. The blame for this misconception lies squarely on both men and women: What men want to see in a woman and what women want to see in a man. Other than plastic surgery there are methods even more harmful; many people try steroids (mostly men and athletes of both genders) and more common for girls is the strategy of starving themselves and only eat enough to barely sustain themselves. Both of them are extremely harmful and possibly life-threatening.

Another method that is also equally dangerous and contains the possibility for even more damage and medical issues is drugs. I am not able to specify any particular kinds. But it is easily seen through newspaper reports these days that there is widespread drug use among male and female athletes. Eating disorders and artificial body image corrections seem to be attested everywhere in the world. Again India is no exception to this!

Mental Issues

Apart from physical damage there are also many mental issues that result from this. These mental issues are created by the pressure of the oppressors on the individual, putting him/her down and forcing them to try to change themselves into something they were not meant to be. Every day there are individuals being mocked, and made fun of, and being bullied. There is only so much hurt someone can take until they have a mental breakdown, or in some other cases (growing numbers every year) they commit suicide, or make attempts to.

A Multilevel Approach is Necessary

The *Encyclopedia* cited above suggests:

Understanding eating disorders a multilevel model combining psychological, interpersonal, social, and psychological factors. Feelings of inadequacy,

depression, anxiety, loneliness, troubled family backgrounds, lack of identity, and
slit affect can contribute. (p. 378)

The new generation of software professionals in India seems to be affected by personality
issues and the factors listed above. Insecurity in general, excessive competitive spirit, fear, and
focus on personal wealth generation, etc., create confusion and image problems.

Change in Minds – An Important Step

What we have come to, to put it plainly, is very pathetic and shameful for our society.
This may not be something we can easily fix, but nevertheless we cannot ignore it. The only
way, in my opinion, is to change the minds of those being oppressed. If we can build them up
and encourage them into thinking that they are beautiful in their own unique way then the
oppressors wouldn't have anyone to oppress and the issue would be brought to an end. There are
many people out there who feel that they are not good enough for this messed up world full of
show and amoral and immoral conduct, and they shouldn't have to feel that way! It is up to us to
help them and support them!

Reference

David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill (Eds.) 1991. *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and
Counseling*. Second Edition. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

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