

Welcome! We will begin the presentation shortly. Please note that your microphones have been muted automatically.



Eating Disorders in Youth: A Webinar for Parents and Caregivers

Joanna Zelichowska, MA RCC

July 27, 2021



About the Kelty Centre & Jessie's Legacy

- **BC Children's Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre**
 - Provincial mental health & substance use resource centre for parents/caregivers of children & youth, as well as individuals of any age with a disordered eating concern
- **Jessie's Legacy Eating Disorders Awareness & Prevention Program**
 - Provides access to eating disorder resources, tools, and information for individuals, families, and educators
 - Coordinates awareness activities, and offers school presentations
 - A program of Family Services of the North Shore

Housekeeping

- Attendees are automatically muted and cameras are turned off.
- Please submit questions for the speakers through the “Q&A” function. There has been an option enabled where you can vote for questions that you want answered.
- Please submit technical questions or comments through the “Chat” function
- At the end of the webinar, a survey will pop up that we invite you to complete
- Webinar recording and slides will be made available on both the Kelty Centre’s (<https://bit.ly/keltywebinars>) and Jessie’s Legacy’s (jessieslegacy.com/resources-and-information) websites shortly following the event.
- This information applies to the context in British Columbia. If you are in another jurisdiction please consult local health and school authorities for further information.

Speaker



Joanna Zelichowska, MA, RCC

Manager

Jessie's Legacy Eating Disorders Awareness & Prevention Program

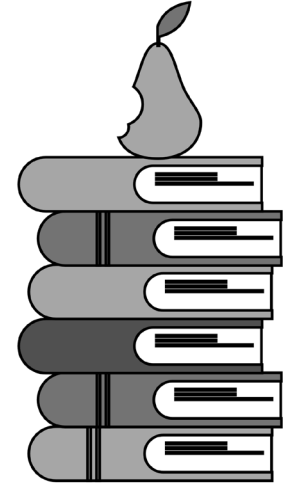
Land Acknowledgment

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are fortunate to be able to gather, live, work, and play on the unceded traditional territory of the x^wməθk^wəy'əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Sel̓íl'witulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations of the Coast Salish Peoples.



Learning Objectives

- **Understanding the spectrum of disordered eating**
- **Recognizing early signs and symptoms**
- **Know when additional support is needed**
- **Practical strategies for creating a supportive home environment**
- **Tips for how to talk to your youth about your concerns**



Understanding Eating Disorders

For many families:

- **Shared meals offer opportunities for connectedness**
- **Center of many celebrations**



As a result, it can be extremely anxiety provoking to see your youth struggling with food. It can be difficult to understand why your youth may be using food in a way that is harmful to them.

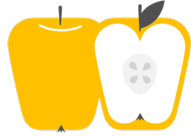
These feelings are normal. Increasing your understanding of your teen's experience will help you navigate how to relate and support them.

The Wide Spectrum of Disordered Eating



What's the Difference Between Dieting and Healthy Eating?

Healthy Eating



- **Adequate, meets nutritional needs**
- **Balanced, inclusive**
- **Improved quality**
- **Freedom and flexibility**
- **“Everyday and sometimes foods”; all foods can fit**
- **Enjoyable; positive mood**
- **Based on internal cues of hunger and satiety**
- **Long term**

Dieting



- **Restrictive, restrained eating**
- **Omits certain foods/food groups**
- **Limited quantity**
- **Rigid rules**
- **“Good food, bad food”**
- **Unsatisfying; negative mood**
- **Based on external controls (e.g. calorie counting)**
- **Short term**

Credit: Helen Yeung, RD, Vancouver Coastal Health

Disordered Eating vs. Eating Disorders

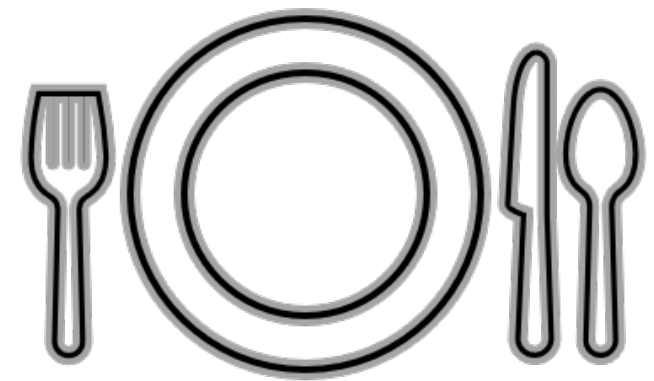
Disordered eating behaviours and chronic dieting are major risk factors for developing an eating disorder.

Individuals with eating disorders will exhibit patterns of disordered eating, however, not everyone who experiences disordered eating will develop an eating disorder.

It is estimated that approximately 35% of “normal dieters” will develop some disordered eating behaviours.¹

Key factors to evaluate with respect to frequency and severity:

- **Behaviours**
- **Preoccupation and distress**
- **Impact on functioning**



Disordered Eating vs. Eating disorders

In disordered eating, not all symptoms required for a diagnosis of AN, BN, BED, or OSFED, may be present OR the frequency and severity of symptoms may not meet the clinical cut offs.

It is important to note disordered eating does not need to meet threshold criteria for a clinical diagnosis to be harmful, life-altering, and worthy of getting support.

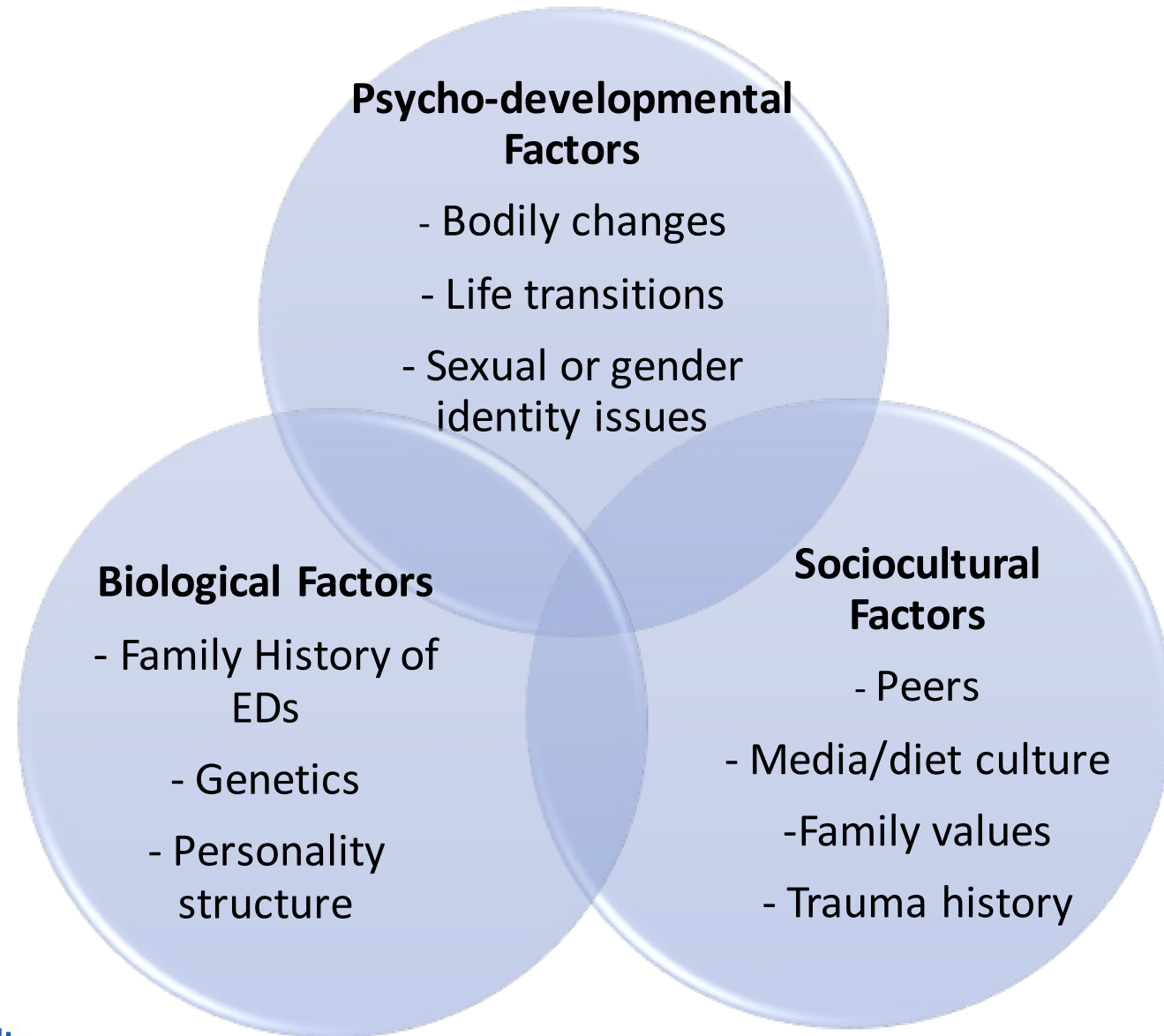
**Your teen may not look sick or underweight to be suffering.
You cannot tell if someone is struggling with an eating disorder by looking at them.**



Contributing Factors

Eating disorders are complex and nuanced. There is rarely one specific cause or trigger.

Each individual is unique and there is likely a combination or pressures and challenges that have contributed to its development.



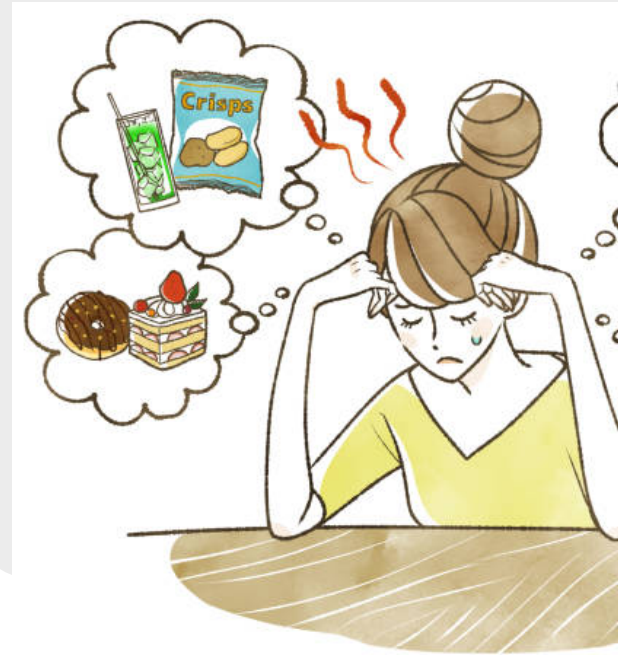
Contributing Factors Continued...

- **Pressure to maintain weight during puberty**
- **Pressure from athletic involvement or peer groups**
- **Social focus on eating “clean” and “keeping fit”**
- **Family beliefs about size and shape**
- **Increase in stress levels**
- **Life transitions, challenges and changing responsibilities**
- **Emotional coping or avoidance**
- **Low self esteem**
- **Internalized ideal of thinness**
- **“Fat Talk” (e.g., “I look sooo fat in that photo”)**
- **Weight based teasing and bullying**



Signs and Symptoms of an Eating Disorder

- **Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, nutrition**
- **Intense interest in food but not consuming it (e.g., cooking/baking for others)**
- **Refusal to eat certain foods or whole categories of food (e.g., no carbohydrates, fats, etc.)**
- **Discomfort eating around others**
- **Food rituals (excessive chewing, doesn't allow foods to touch)**
- **New practices with food or fad diets, skipping meals, eating small portions**
- **Preoccupation with body shape/size**
- **Frequent body checking, preoccupation with perceived flaws**
- **Increased intensity of mood swings**
- **Withdrawal from friends, social activities, hobbies**



Signs and Symptoms of an Eating Disorder

- **Noticeable fluctuations in weight**
- **Wearing baggy or layered clothing to hide weight loss**
- **Stomach cramps, other non-specific gastrointestinal complaints (constipation, acid reflux, etc.)**
- **Irregular menses (e.g., missing periods or delay of onset)**
- **Difficulties concentrating**
- **Sleep disturbances**
- **Dizziness, fainting, frequent lightheadedness**
- **Abnormal laboratory findings (anemia, low thyroid and hormone levels, low potassium, low white and red blood cell counts)**
- **Impaired immune functioning**



Signs and Symptoms of an Eating Disorder

- **Cuts or scrapes across the top of fingers or knuckles as a result of inducing vomiting**
- **Dental issues from vomiting (e.g., cavities, tooth discoloration, or erosion of enamel)**
- **Swelling or puffiness of the face**
- **Changes in skin, hair, and/or nails (e.g., dry skin and hair, hair loss, brittle nails)**
- **Feeling cold all the time**
- **Appearance of fine hair on the body and face (lanugo)**



How to Know When to Get Help

The greater number of symptoms present, the greater the risk. The sooner help is accessed, the better the chances of a quick recovery.

If you have concerns about your youth, it is important to start the conversation. It's never too soon to start a dialogue.

Medical attention is required if your teen is:

- **underweight (BMI < 18.5)**
- **experiencing a concerning change in weight**
- **fasting, skipping meals, or eating very little**
- **exercising too much or too often**
- **vomiting, taking laxatives, or other medications intended to alter weight or shape**



The Power of the Eating Disorder Voice

The thoughts your teen may be having about food and their body image may appear to be illogical and irrational.

Eating disorders can have such a powerful influence that many have described experiencing it as its own “voice.”

This voice can be extremely self-critical, persuasive and persistent. This is experienced by your teen as very real and very frightening.

It's important to remember that your teen did not choose to become unwell or intend to create worry and heartache for you and your family.



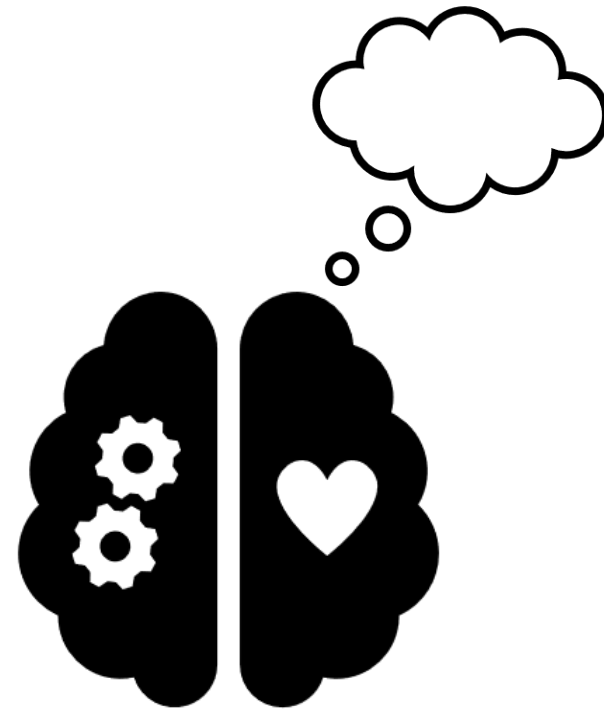
The Power of the Eating Disorder Voice

Remember that your teen's focus on eating, body image, and/or exercise is serving a purpose.

Symptoms are often (initially) effective in managing anxiety by providing a sense of control and distraction away from other stressors, challenges, or feelings.

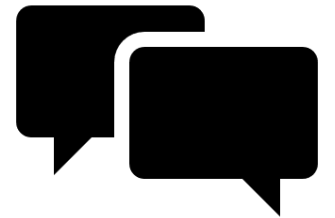
Additionally, weight loss is strongly rewarded and reinforced in our culture.

For all these reasons, it can be very scary for your teen to think about changing their behaviour or beliefs.



How to Start the Conversation

- **Approach your teen with an open, curious, non-judgmental stance.**
- **Try to pick a time that is relaxed and avoid mealtimes for serious conversations.**
- **Ask open-ended questions that create space for conversation (e.g., “How have you been feeling today?”) and avoid closed or yes/no questions (e.g., “Did you eat lunch?”)**
- **Consistently reinforce the message that you’re here and available to talk, even if they don’t take you up on your offer.**
- **Remind your child that you love them no matter what.**



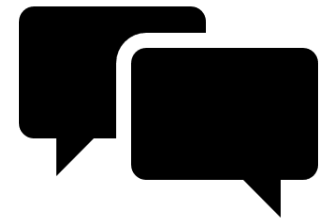
How to Start the Conversation

In your initial conversation, try to focus on simply voicing your concerns rather than having a confrontation or challenging their behaviours.

Focus on what you observe and how you're experiencing your teen, do NOT focus on appearance or excessive focus on food (your teen is already hyperaware of that).

- **“I notice you haven't been acting like yourself lately, you've been spending more time in your room, can you tell me about that?”**

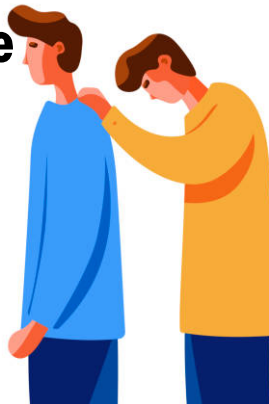
This is not a single conversation, try to not be discouraged if your teen is not receptive to your first attempt.



Tips for Moving Forward and Supporting Yourself

Avoid blaming yourself. It is important to acknowledge that you may never know what triggered these behaviours in your teen. Work on accepting that your child has an illness/is struggling and focus on incorporating positive supports and working towards recovery.

Learn as much as you can about eating disorders. This will help you to understand your teen's behaviours, feelings and mood swings. There may be aspects of the illness that will seem illogical and hard to understand (e.g., your teen insisting they are overweight when they are not). You do not have to agree but try to accept that this feels true for them.



Tips for Moving Forward and Supporting Yourself

Continue eating normally as a family. It's important that your teen sees you and the family enjoying food and normal helpings.

Be mindful of not making appearance or diet related comments about yourself or others, modeling acceptance of size and shape diversity is powerful.

Keep including your teen in family and social events (even if they don't join in) and try to build up their self esteem by sharing the qualities you value about them that are not related to appearance (e.g., kindness, integrity).

Seek support for yourself if you're struggling. It can be helpful to have a sounding board to express your worries and frustrations.



Where to get more help

- **Jessie's Legacy Eating Disorders Awareness & Prevention Program**
<https://jessieslegacy.com/>
- **BC Children's Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre**
<https://keltyeatingdisorders.ca/>
- **Looking Glass Foundation**
<https://www.lookingglassbc.com/>
- **Family physician**





jessie's legacy
Eating disorders prevention and awareness



Family
Services
NORTH SHORE
Changing lives together

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YOU ARE WHOLE. YOU ARE ENOUGH.

Your worth can't be measured by the numbers on the scale, the size of your clothes, or the reflection in the mirror. Love your body and love yourself.
Every. Single. Day.



Jessie's Legacy provides education, resources and inspiration to prevent eating disorders and address disordered eating.

Created and operated by Family Services of the North Shore

LOVE OUR BODIES, LOVE OURSELVES

We believe that a healthy body image and a resilient sense of



Questions for our Speaker....

Please submit them through the Q&A icon



Thank-you for joining

Kelty Centre:
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keltyeatingdisorders.ca

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