

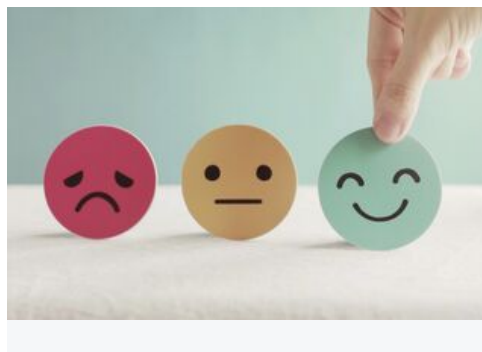


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The Binge Eating Prevention Plan

3 Tips for Lasting Recovery From Anorexia Nervosa

Is anorexia causing unwanted havoc in your life?
Be honest with yourself.

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*This post was written by
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Eating less than your body
needs can be harmful—it
can interfere with your

Anorexia nervosa is a complex, serious illness emerging from a combination of genetic vulnerability, temperament, and personality traits, combined with environmental, physiological, and sociological components. What makes the impact of the significant nutrition deficit dangerous is that it sets off the potentially devastating physiological and psychological effects of starvation.

The harsh reality is that mortality rates are higher for those with anorexia nervosa than for those with other mental illnesses and six times higher for them compared to the general population.

“Our study shows a very clear and substantial biological component to anorexia nervosa, and my hope is that this will offer some support to patients and their families.” —Cynthia Bulik, Ph.D.

**Choosing to diet is not the same as
choosing to have anorexia**

in order to achieve a certain physical appearance—it's not a fad or a choice. It impacts people across many categories: genders, body shapes and sizes, races, ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

"The United States national comorbidity study shows that 25% of anorexia nervosa... presentations are male. So this is not an insignificant minority anymore ... It's substantial." — Stuart Murray, Ph.D.

People with anorexia nervosa have an intense fear of weight gain and a distorted image of their body. They also often don't recognize the potential for serious health consequences related to imposed nutritional deficits, overexercising, muscularity-oriented eating, muscle building, or refusing to maintain an adequate weight for their sex, age, developmental status, and health condition.

You may think that you are not sick enough

considered whether you're "sick enough," you probably are.

These common beliefs can prevent you from engaging in treatment or getting started in the first place, despite the eating disorder causing unwanted havoc in your life.

Effective treatments have common goals

The specific paths to nutritional restoration differ from person to person. But a non-negotiable agenda is to meet your body's energy needs through food to restore healthy physiological functioning of your organs, hormones, metabolism, and more. Medical management is necessary. Depending on your symptoms, you may also engage in therapy, nutritional counseling, and/or psychiatry. Evidence-based treatment for anorexia nervosa include family-based therapy (FBT), cognitive behavioral therapy-extended version (CBT), adolescent-focused therapy (AFT), and more. The three tips below can help with anorexia recovery and relapse prevention.

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Tip #1: Make food your medicine

The key to getting your health back is to view food as your medicine. The most important message I share with clients and their families is this: Don't get distracted by how you got to this point. Instead, focus on what you'll do to get the food you need to restore your brain and body to health.

Your brain needs ample nutrition over a period of time before it will get out of starvation mode. Once it does, your body and mind will get the message that you no longer have to conserve energy, and your cardiorespiratory, gastrointestinal, endocrine, metabolic, dermatologic, and psychiatric systems can return to normal functioning.

Tip #2: Build your team

recovery using family-based therapy, it is essential to partner with a medical provider. You may also consider getting assistance from other professionals. A registered dietitian can guide your nutritional restoration, and a skilled therapist can help you tolerate the process of nutritional rehabilitation and reckon with personality traits or cognitive habits that may hinder full recovery.

Identifying a trusted parent, partner, or friend who can help you stay accountable to your health is another way to have support as you develop a realistic recovery plan.

Tip #3: Make your life bigger

While eating more is a first step, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that it may not be enough. Beyond food, it may be necessary to target traits or symptoms that may keep you from full recovery or may make you vulnerable to relapse, such as perfectionism, anxiety, cognitive rigidity, fear of specific foods, harsh self-talk, body dissatisfaction, obsessiveness, or intolerance of uncertainty.



Equally as important, introduce positive people and activities into your life. Make time to do more of what you enjoy, and spend time with people you care about. Full healing comes about when you experience the freedom to thrive based on your authentic self and live according to your values. You may want to consider how to curate your social media environment.

"We're seeing so much on social media that makes us feel like we are less than, or we're not what we should be, that you kind of need a mantra to repeat in your head when you start to have harmful or unhealthy thoughts." –Taylor Swift

Recovery is a leap of faith worth taking

It may seem daunting to recover if your brain and body are dealing with the effects of starvation. But life on the other side is worth it. In full recovery, you'll be able to laugh more easily, know what you want with greater clarity, and use your natural strengths such as persistence when things are difficult. Moreover, you'll foster a drive for achievement in the direction of leading an intentional, full, happy, healthy, thriving life.

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