

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are a group of conditions marked by an unhealthy relationship with food. These conditions grow beyond attempts to “eat healthy” or “lose weight” into an obsessive, controlling, preoccupation with food.

Eating disorders are complicated, dangerous (sometimes deadly) symptoms of underlying struggles. Individuals must relearn to eat in a healthy way, while addressing the underlying issues. Core issues may include: deep-rooted insecurity, low self-worth or self-hate, repressed guilt or shame, perfectionism, control, and people-pleasing. Often, the person with the disorder does not believe he or she is in real danger. Medical evaluations are often helpful ensure a safe recovery.

Eating Disorders include:

- **Anorexia:** the restriction of caloric intake, even to the point of starvation.
- **Bulimia:** the consumption of large amounts of food (binges), followed by purging behaviors such as self-induced vomiting, laxative abuse, and/or over-exercise to purge calories.
- **Binge eating:** the uncontrollable consumption of large amounts of food in one sitting, not accompanied by purging behaviors.

Biblical Insights

God sees you, loves you as you are, and wants to help you. You are his wonderful creation. He has a plan for you. He has not forgotten or forsaken you. He wants to heal you.

- “For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13)
- “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13)
- “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

Eating Disorder Assessment

If you wonder whether you have an eating disorder, honestly answer the following questions:

- 1 Do you obsessively think about food, count calories, or weigh yourself multiple times daily?
- 2 If you eat “bad” food, do you have to make up for it by skipping a meal, exercising, or purging?
- 3 Is your mood determined by your scale or whether you exercise?
- 4 Do you hide how much you eat, exercise, vomit, or take laxatives/diuretics?
- 5 Do you eat food, avoid food, or purge food in order to feel better? After eating, do you feel shame, guilt, angry or depressed?
- 6 Do you have secret food habits or feel out of control with food?
- 7 Do you feel guilt over your past, shame about who you are, or worthless?
- 8 Do you wear baggy clothes in order to hide your body?
- 9 Do you avoid others because of how you look or avoid eating when others are present?
- 10 Do you feel that you have to look or perform perfectly to be happy, loved, or accepted?

There’s nothing you’ve done that God can’t forgive and nothing done to you that God can’t heal.

- “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” (Romans 8:1, 33-34)

- “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)

Your body is precious. God created you to reflect his image. He has entrusted you with a physical body that will someday be gloriously transformed. You are its steward, not its owner.

- “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)
- “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own. (1 Corinthians 6:19)
- “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)

Willpower won't heal you. Anything short of complete spiritual transformation by the power of Christ is only behavior modification and is bound to fail.

- “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you and uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)
- “I [Christ] am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Only God's love is enough to fill you and satisfy you.

- “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!” (Psalm 34:8)
- “Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.” (Psalm 107:8-9)

God is in control and He is good. Any sense of control we experience is an illusion; control has always belonged to God, who works in all things with perfect knowledge and love.

- “No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord. The horse is made ready for the day

of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.” (Proverbs 21:30-31)

- “He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.” (Psalm 40:2-3)

Next Steps

- Ask Christ to heal you (Romans 10:13). There is hope for healing in Christ. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, learn more at regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.
- If you answered yes to two or more of the questions in the Eating Disorder Assessment in this document, consider visiting a medical doctor. Be honest about your struggle with food.
- When tempted to engage in disordered eating behaviors, do something different: pray and ask God for help, and inform someone you trust about your temptation. (Isaiah 41:10)
- Prepare for difficult situations in advance. Plan meals, pack snacks that feel safe, and get the support of trusted person to help. Support is important! (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Do not give up when you mess up. Be patient with yourself. Recovery can be a moment-by-moment surrender to God. His grace and love are unconditional. Recovery is hard, but possible. (2 Cor 12:9)
- Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like a re:generation group, to address your eating disorder, and identify the underlying issues causing your struggle. (1 John 1:7)

Additional Resources:

- Find testimonies, articles, and other helpful resources at regenerationrecovery.org/eatingdisorders.