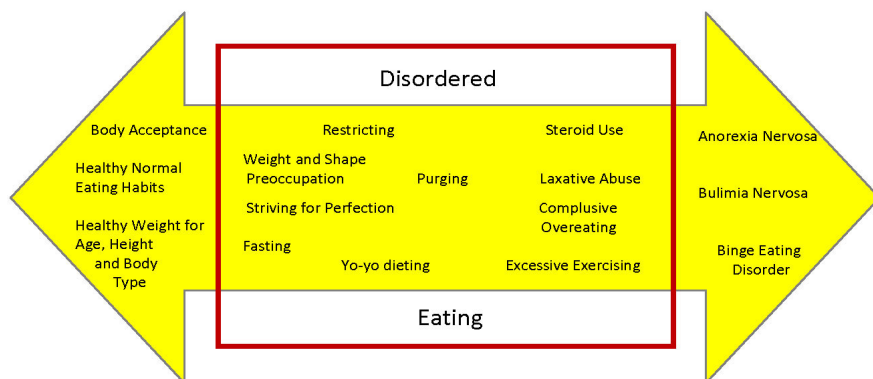


## Provincial Eating Disorder Awareness Week

February 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> 2012 is Provincial Eating Disorder Awareness Week (PEDAW). Help tackle disordered eating & eating disorders by raising your awareness about this important issue.

### What is Disordered Eating?

Disordered eating refers to the wide range of abnormal behaviours, thoughts and feelings associated with eating and body image. It includes but is not limited to dieting, over-exercising, abusing laxatives, diuretics or steroids, binge eating, compulsively weighing oneself, and having feelings of shame and disgust towards one's body. These symptoms may not be extreme or frequent enough to classify as a clinical eating disorder (i.e., anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating disorder), but this does not make disordered eating any less important. Individuals engage in disordered eating as a means to cope with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress. It is important to approach disordered eating from a place of compassion and seriousness.



**Who does it affect?** Disordered eating does not discriminate. It is a major mental health issue that affects both females and males, preschool-aged children through to the elderly, and individuals of all other diverse backgrounds.

### The numbers!

- 81% of 10 year olds are fearful of being fat.
- 98% of females are unhappy with their bodies.
- By the time they enter high school, 50% of girls and 33% of boys have engaged in some sort of unhealthy weight control behaviour.
- A 2002 study showed that 1.5 per cent of Canadian girls and women between 15 and 24 years old reported symptoms indicative of an eating disorder (Canada, 2006)
- In 2008, nearly 60,000 British Columbians were living with a diagnosed eating disorder (BC Statistics, 2008)
- For references and to learn about other studies please visit [www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca).

### Risk factors

Certain genetic and social factors put children and youth at greater risk for engaging in disordered eating. These include genetic predispositions; having a family member who struggles with disordered eating, a history of trauma (i.e. abuse, bullying), mental illness, personality factors such as perfectionism or impulsivity, unhealthy attachment to caregivers, feeling silenced or unheard, cultural pressures to look a certain way, shame or embarrassment during puberty, having peers who engage in disordered eating, and internalizing unhealthy family and societal values around food, weight and body shape.



### **Tips for preventing disordered eating:**

- Focus encouraging comments on your people's personality and individuality, as opposed to their appearance.
- Conceptualize the body as a gift - especially for those who are able-bodied. Practice gratefulness and body acceptance.
- Refrain from judging your body and eating habits in front of others. Instead, model a healthy and balanced relationship to food and exercise.
- Reflect on whether you may be sending your others harmful weight-biased messages (do you believe that people who look a certain way are "better" than others?).
- Be critical about the media and its unhealthy messages.
- Do not engage in 'Fat Talk'
- Learn about and discuss the dangers of disordered eating.

### **How parents can help**

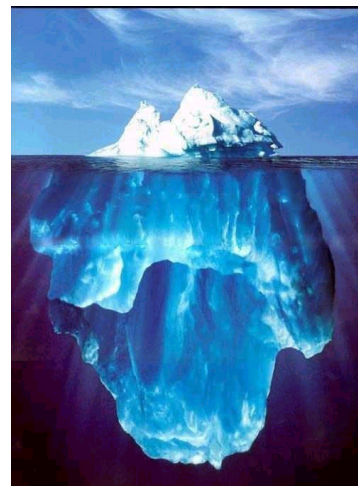
Parents play an integral role in preventing and helping their children recover from disorder eating.

### **The Iceberg Metaphor Disordered Eating / Eating Disorders are NOT just about food!**

The behaviours that you see above the surface...  
*Restricting, bingeing, purging, obsessive focus on body weight and shape control...*

...do not reflect the issues underlying an eating disorder. Recovery begins to occur when the issues below the surface are addressed.

These may include:  
*Unmet emotional needs, lack of coping skills, anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive behaviour, trauma, family dynamics, media and cultural issues.*



### **What to do if you or someone you know is struggling. Seek help before it worsens.**

Every door is the right door so contact any of the community- based outpatient services below for additional information:

- VCH Eating Disorders Program: (604) 675-2531
- Richmond Eating Disorders Program: (604) 244-5489
- Be Real Eating Disorders Clinic: (604) 992-4814
- Healthy Attitudes Program: (604) 604-321-6151

### **Interested in learning more? Check out these wonderful Canadian resources:**

Jessie's Legacy: [www.familyservices.bc.ca/professionals-a-educators/jessies-legacy](http://www.familyservices.bc.ca/professionals-a-educators/jessies-legacy)

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre: [www.keltyeatingdisorders.ca](http://www.keltyeatingdisorders.ca)

National Eating Disorder Information Centre: [www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca)