



THE COACH  
APPROACH

## EATING DISORDERS - SELF HELP GUIDE

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An eating disorder can be a very difficult thing to admit to, even to yourself at first, and talking to those closest to you about the situation may seem like a huge and overwhelming task. Acknowledging that you have a problem is the first step and if you're reading this, then you're already at least part way there.

This short guide will talk you through what an eating disorder is, how it can be treated, and how you can take control by helping yourself.

Recovery might take some time, but it is definitely possible, and with the support of the right people, you can get there.

### What is an eating disorder and how can it affect you?

If someone develops a different attitude to their shape and weight, to how they look in the mirror and to their food, which begins to interfere with their life, they have an eating disorder.

Depending on the disorder, they might over or under eat, use laxatives, vomit, use slimming pills and binge eat, all in an effort to control how they look and how they feel.

Anyone at any age can be affected by an eating disorder, but it tends to happen more often in teenagers and young adulthood, and more to women than to men.

### Anorexia nervosa:

Many people with this condition look in the mirror and see themselves as very overweight, even though to anyone else, they are definitely underweight.

They obsessively control their food and their weight, weighing themselves constantly to keep track. They might also binge eat and then try to control their weight by exercising to excess, inducing vomiting, using laxatives and diuretics, and eating very small portions.

They are terrified of gaining weight and restrict their food, while the loss of weight can cause their periods to stop. Over the long term, an anorexia sufferer might develop osteoporosis, dry, yellow skin, muscle wasting and low body temperature among other symptoms.

### Bulimia nervosa:

Sufferers of bulimia often binge eat large amounts in secret, without feeling that they can control it. They feel remorse after the binge and will make themselves vomit, fast, use diuretics and laxatives and exercise excessively to try and control their weight.

Unlike with anorexia, bulimia sufferers are usually a healthy weight or even slightly overweight, but they do have in common the desperation to lose weight and a deep unhappiness with their body.

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They might have a sore throat, dehydration, and worn tooth enamel from vomiting. They might suffer from intestinal problems because of laxative use.

## Binge-eating disorder:

Sufferers of the binge-eating disorder have no control at all over their eating. They binge eat like bulimia sufferers but don't attempt to purge what they've eaten or exercise to make up for what they've eaten. They are usually overweight and can be at risk of high blood pressure and heart disease.

All of these eating disorders are very serious and they can be life-threatening over the long term.

If you recognise yourself in any of these behaviours, if you feel that you look fat even when your family and friends constantly tell you that you don't, if you stress about putting on weight and constantly weigh yourself or think you can only be happy once you reach your 'ideal' weight, you could have an eating disorder, so do seek help.

## Treatment methods

These eating disorders are not something you can treat yourself at home, so please get help from a qualified medical professional.

Get a full physical health check first of all. Anorexia and bulimia can be incredibly dangerous and even if you only do the purge and binge cycle occasionally, you could still have some health problems. Take care of those first, and then you can think about your recovery.

Your doctor might consider prescribing medication for you, such as antidepressants. This will be tailored to you individually, though, so you may be offered psychotherapy, cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) or counselling instead. You may benefit from a package of several different therapies, including nutritional counselling to help you manage your eating habits, and the therapy will help you work through your feelings about the eating disorder and look at how to get you past it.

Solution focused clinical hypnotherapy can also be used to help anyone suffering from an eating disorder. It is ideal as it can benefit several aspects of the disorder. Hypnosis is used initially to find the cause of the disorder and allow any emotional reactions to be dealt with, and your therapist can help you to look at any negative behavior and form new and positive patterns instead.

Hypnotherapy can also work to remove any sense of a distorted body image, and improve your confidence. You can learn to relax and to manage your stress, and hypnosis can even soothe any Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) symptoms that might have been caused.

## Self-help

You've already done the hardest step in coming forward and asking for help, but there are some things you can do to help yourself, which will make you feel in control of your own recovery:

### 1. Support groups

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Join a support group in person and attend regularly. You'll feel understood and you'll know that everyone there can relate to what you are going through. You might also be able to help others deal with their problems, and that will make you feel good and build your confidence.

In between meetings, there are many online support groups and forums that you might find helpful.

## 2. Be positive about yourself

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With an eating disorder, you've had so much focus on your body and the food you put into it, that it could help to take a look at what you like about yourself. Just like everyone else, you have things that make you special; you have skills and talents, good qualities and achievements.

Take some time and list all of those things. If you're struggling, ask your friends and family. What are you good at? What do they love about you?

Adding to that, look at yourself in the mirror, but instead of looking for flaws, deliberately focus on what you like about your body. Write those things down, too.

Who you are is about far more than just your physical appearance, and now you have a list of amazing and positive things about yourself that you can look at when you're having a bad day.

## 3. Deal with any negative self-talk

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We all have that nagging little negative voice that pops up when we're feeling uncertain or low in confidence, but that doesn't mean we have to listen to it.

If you catch yourself on a familiar train of negative thoughts, stop and ask yourself if there's actually any evidence to support what they're saying. Go back and look through that incredible list of all your talents and good points. Keep practising to replace the negatives with all those positives instead. It might take time at first, but it will get easier.

## 4. Find ways to improve your body image

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Dress to make yourself feel good, wear the colours and styles that you love, and dress for you, not for anyone else's, opinion.

You are not your weight. Don't weigh yourself at all, because it doesn't matter what you weigh. That might take some getting used to, but it can take a whole lot of pressure off.

Ignore the fashion magazines with those impossibly thin models. Most of them have been Photoshopped to look much thinner than they are, and much thinner in some cases than is actually possible. Don't try and compete with that because you can't. And even better, you don't need to.

Do wonderful things for your body. Pamper yourself with mani-pedis and massages; facials and spa treatments. Whatever makes you feel good. Your body is an amazing thing no matter what weight or shape it is. You'll feel good because you're taking care of yourself and you'll be building a far better and more balanced relationship with your body.

Get some exercise, not only because it will naturally tone you up, but because it produces endorphins and makes you feel good.

## 5. Learn to eat healthily

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Listen to your body and eat regularly. Your body needs fuel in the form of food just to function, and skipping meals is not good for you. You'll keep thinking about food constantly, and then may overeat or eat things that are bad for you instead.

Focus on eating foods you really enjoy that will give you energy and keep you healthy, rather than thinking about what you can't have.

## Conclusion

Take your time. You don't have to wade through all those items on the self-help list at once, or even at all. Pick what works for you, and do the easy things first before working your way up as you feel better. If you really can't look at your body and find good things yet, then leave that for a later time, when you're ready.

If you find any areas of resistance, work with your therapist and your hypnotherapist, if you're using one, to help you move forward.

If you'd like to find out more about my clinical hypnotherapy services based in Falmouth, Cornwall, you can call for an informal chat or to book an appointment. You can also book online.

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