
Breaking Down Bulimia: the Causes of the Disorder

I chose to write about Bulimia Nervosa because when I twelve years old I started purging after binge-eating. It was Christmas break and all my friend left the village for one reason or another. I found myself very bored and alone so I would binge eat while watching television. I started to feel increasingly bad about myself and worried a lot about gaining weight because I was already the fattest kid in school. I came up with a bright idea to start throwing up the food I ate. I went about three days and I was very happy with myself for continuing to throw up after meals. One day I went into the bathroom to do the after meal routine and shoved my fingers down my throat. My mom started banging on the door and yelled, "you better stop that". After that day, I binged but never vomited after doing so.

An eating disorder is defined by Merriam-Webster's dictionary as, "any of several psychological disorders characterized by serious disturbances of eating behavior." Bulimia Nervosa is described as eating unreasonable amounts of food followed by purging, enemas, laxative abuse, or over exercising. The DSM-5 states, that to be diagnosed as having Bulimia Nervosa someone must have: "recurrent episodes of binge eating, recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior in order to prevent weight gain, the binge eating and inappropriate compensatory behaviors both occur on average, at least once a week for three months, self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape/weight and the disturbance does not occur exclusively during episodes of Anorexia Nervosa.

Several things can cause Bulimia Nervosa. One of the main causes is the desire to be slim that are influenced by culture and societal trends. Uppers, Downers, All Rounders states, "the biochemical changes involved with bulimia can make the disorder self-perpetuating. There is evidence that metabolism slows down to adapt to the bulimic cycle, which causes weight gain from the same intake of food." When people vomit or use laxatives the body releases natural opioids therefore people suffering from bulimia actually get addicted to their bodies natural pain relievers. According to the textbook, Uppers, Downers, All Rounders the effects of bulimia are: "dental complications, a greater liability for alcohol and drug abuse, dependency on laxatives for normal bowel movements, a high rate of depression, a greater risk of suicide and stomach acid burns to the esophagus and throat." Acid from the stomach eats up tooth enamel, increases development of cavities and gives the front teeth a chipped and ragged appearance.

Reasons why people chose to be bulimic vary case to case. In society today slim is attractive; if you take a look at the covers of magazines and advertisements all over the world you can see that being slim makes you desirable, wanted and attractive. One of the big reasons why people choose to engage in unhealthy weight loss techniques is to fit in with the culture. Others can be

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bulimic because they believe that it will help them manage their weight. One might be bulimic in response to bullying, trauma, seeking approval among other reasons.

If a doctor suspects you have bulimia he/she will complete a physical exam, take a blood/urine test and perform a psychological evaluation. Several types of treatment might be necessary to treat someone with bulimia. A combination of psychotherapy and antidepressants is the most effective team. Treatment is best when done as a team of: patient, primary care doctor, dietician, family, mental health provider and case manager to coordinate care. Evidence shows that cognitive behavioral therapy, family-based therapy and interpersonal psychotherapy help improved symptoms of bulimia. FDA approved drugs used to treat bulimia are fluoxetine which is a type selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI).

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