

The Tiger In the Jungle: Identifying Eating Disorders in Children

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Kalamazoo Eating Disorders Professional Coalition
www.kalamazooeatingdisorders.org

Special points of interest:

- * Definition
- * Symptoms to Look Out For
- * Additional Sources: web-sites, books, videos...
- * Where to Seek Help

Sources for information and help:

- * National Eating Disorders Association:
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
- * "Spotting the Tiger" (video) by Kartini Clinic
- * Something Fishy Website on Eating Disorders:
www.somethingfishy.org
- * KEDPC website for more information and contacts:
www.kalamazooeatingdisorders.org

Defining and Identifying Anorexia Nervosa in Young Children

It is important to keep in mind that anorexia is the result of long term malnutrition not due to poor parenting. These patterns are often set in children while in upper elementary and middle school. Even if they are not reaching a medical crises level during this period, chance of recovery is greater if stopped before the child begins suffering physical damage or impaired thinking due to starvation and/or malnutrition.

Through early detection and quick response time it is possible to minimize the negative impact the illness will have on the child's academic and social development. However, it is important to note that the symptoms in younger children may be quite different from the symptoms in young

adults.

For example:

Body image disturbances may not yet be present. Therefore, we need to seek out anxieties directly or indirectly related to food and weight loss.

Look for:

Steady loss of weight (it may take several months or more before the child begins to show dramatic physical changes)

Aversion to types/categories of food.

Focus on calorie counting

Anxiety and/or obsessive-compulsive behavior

Glossary: (according to NEDA Toolkit from National Eating Disorders Assoc.)

Binge Eating (also Bingeing): Consuming an amount of food that is considered much larger than the amount that most individuals would eat under similar circumstances within a discrete period of time.

Body Image: The subjective opinion about one's physical appearance based on self-perception of body size and shape and the reactions of others.

Bulimia Nervosa: A disorder defined in the DSM-IV-TR in which a patient



Through early detection and quick response, it is possible to minimize the negative impact of an eating disorder.

binges on food an average of twice weekly over a three-month period, followed by compensatory behavior aimed at preventing weight gain. This behavior may include excessive exercise, vomiting, or the misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or other medications