

How to Help Yourself

ADMIT

to yourself that you have a problem and need help.

TELL

someone about your problem and ask for help, i.e. a friend, family member, health professional, teacher, or counselor.

LEARN

- that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- about the causes and effects of poor body image and disordered eating.
- about your triggers to binge, starve, or otherwise abuse food or exercise.
- to accept and appreciate your body:
 - Discover what is a healthy weight for you.
 - Realize that health, success, beauty, and happiness come in all shapes and sizes.
- to nurture your inner self:
 - Recognize your feelings and emotional needs, and be open about them to yourself and others.
 - Quiet your mind through relaxation, meditation, and movement.
- to fuel your body:
 - Listen to and honor your body's internal signals for hunger and fullness.
 - Understand the basics of good nutrition and how to plan, prepare, and enjoy healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks.

NOTE: To start your learning process, be sure to check out the self-help books available from the Gurze Books Eating Disorders Resource Catalog at www.bulimia.com.

CHANGE

- Seek professional help from a qualified psychologist, counselor, and/or dietitian.
- Consider joining a support group or an eating disorder treatment program.

NOTE: For a listing of eating disorder specialists, support groups, and treatment facilities, check out www.edreferral.com and www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.

- Accept that setbacks are part of progress -- they are opportunities to learn more about your eating patterns and how you can improve them.
- Be patient and stick with it -- recovery takes time but it is well worth it.

LIVE

- Participate in activities that you enjoy.
- Find fulfillment in everyday life.
- Be receptive to the opportunities life offers.
- Laugh, play, work, and strive for balance.

LEARNING TO ACCEPT & APPRECIATE OUR BODIES

*Health, fitness, success, beauty and happiness
come in all shapes and sizes!*

Don't get hung up on numbers! Weight doesn't tell you much!

- Is it muscle, bone, or fat? Muscle weighs more than fat.
- Weight isn't the best indicator of health or fitness. Your eating habits, exercise patterns, and other lifestyle choices are more important.
- Weight doesn't define who you are or what you are worth as a person.

There is no such thing as one "ideal body weight" based on your height!

- Each one of us has a healthy weight based on our body type, bone structure, muscle mass, genetics, what weight we feel our best at, and what weight our body tends to want to maintain at.

There is a physiological limit to how muscular you can get naturally!

- Many of the supermuscular male bodies you see in the media are just the products of drugs. It is not possible to be that muscular and that lean without chemical assistance.

A FEW TIPS:

- Realize that you cannot change your body type. Learn to love and respect your body and to work with what you have.
- Stop weighing yourself! Focus on how your clothes fit and how you feel. If you keep trying to achieve an unrealistically low body weight for you, you're setting yourself up for failure, depression, and disordered eating.
- Stop comparing yourself to others.
- Celebrate your body and the marvelous things it can do when you are fit and well-nourished.
- Move and enjoy your body. Go walking, swimming, biking, and dancing. Do yoga, aerobics, and weight training... not because you have to, but because it makes you feel strong and energized.
- Invest time and money in yourself, rather than the diet and supplement industry! Spend your money on beautiful clothes, jewelry, haircuts, manicures, and massages -- not on diets!
- Surround yourself with people who have a healthy relationship with food, weight, and their bodies!
- Stop your negative thoughts and statements about yourself! Focus on what you love about yourself. Compliment yourself. Talk to your body the way you would talk to a good friend.
- Reclaim your own inner strength. Focus on the unique qualities and personality traits that make you a special and successful person.

LEARNING TO NURTURE OUR INNER SELVES

Express and fulfill your emotional needs without food!

- Talk through, rather than eat through, negative feelings! Find a friend, family member, support group, or counselor you can be open with. Expressing your bottled up tension to a sympathetic ear can be incredibly helpful.
- Enjoy things you find relaxing! Music, bubble baths, fragrances, candles, massages, reading, napping, stretching...Take time to relax yourself on a regular basis - You do deserve it!
- Be close to nature! Enjoy gardens, sunsets, the beach, birds, a campfire, the stars - Nature can be very soothing!
- Increase loving feelings towards yourself and others! Smile, give and receive hugs, reflect on your positive qualities, count your blessings, praise the things you like about yourself and others, learn to forgive yourself and others.
- Move and enjoy your body! Stretch, dance, breathe deeply, ride a bike, go for a walk, lift weights, roller blade, swim, take a yoga or an aerobics class, run...
- Seek spiritual connection! Prayer, meditation, inspirational reading, reflection...
- Avoid unnecessary competition! Too much concern with winning in too many areas of your life can create excessive tension and anxiety and make one unnecessarily aggressive.
- Learn to plan! Disorganization can breed stress. Having too many projects going simultaneously often leads to confusion, forgetfulness, and a sense that uncompleted projects are hanging over your head. When possible, take on projects one at a time and work on them until completed.
- Recognize and accept limits! Most of us have unreasonable and perfectionist goals for ourselves. We can never be perfect, so we often have a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform. Set achievable goals for yourself.
- Have fun and remain playful! We all need to occasionally escape the pressures of life and have fun. Find activities that are absorbing and enjoyable to you: write, paint, sing, play a musical instrument, visit a museum or amusement park, go to a movie or sporting event, travel, learn a new skill, play a game, laugh out loud...

LEARNING TO FUEL OUR BODIES

Eating well and for all the right reasons!

- **Dump dieting forever!** Diets don't work! They increase your loss of lean body mass vs. fat, they slow down your metabolism, and they make weight re-gain more likely. Also, most are nutritionally inadequate and overly restrictive, which can lead to fatigue, sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, food preoccupation, and binge eating.
- **Focus on health and fitness, not weight!** The number on the scale says nothing about your body composition or your health and fitness status. Look for improvements in your energy, strength, endurance, flexibility, resting heart rate, blood pressure, or blood cholesterol levels as true measures of success. Recognize that health and fitness come in many shapes and sizes.
- **Move your body!** Not because you have to, but because it's fun and it feels good. Do activities you enjoy (whether it's organized sports, working out at the gym, dancing, hiking, or doing yoga). But don't overdo it. Too much exercise, like too much of anything, can be harmful. Adequate rest, along with adequate food & activity, are critical for health, fitness, and well-being.
- **Relate to food as nourishing fuel!** It's not a comforting friend or a fattening enemy. It's fuel! If you don't provide your body with adequate, high quality fuel, it will not perform well.
- **Let the Pyramid guide you!**
 - Enjoy a variety of vegetables and fruits (at least five servings per day) for their disease-fighting phytonutrients and fiber.
 - Choose tasty whole grains (like brown rice and whole wheat breads, cereals, and pasta) for their energy-yielding complex carbohydrates.
 - Include with each meal a good source of protein (fish, poultry, lean meat, tofu, beans, or low fat milk products), for its high satiety value.
 - Add just enough olive or canola oil, nuts/seeds, and avocado for a healthy dose of unsaturated fatty acids. Use plenty of garlic, herbs, and seasonings for flavor.
 - Drink plenty of refreshing water.
- **Legalize all foods!** There is no such thing as a "good" or "bad" food; only good or bad diets. All foods (even pizza and chocolate) can fit into a healthy eating plan.
- **Listen to your body carefully!** Make a distinction between physiological and emotional hunger. Eat when you are physiologically hungry, and stop when you are physiologically full. Nurture your emotional needs without food. (If you're lonely, call a friend. If you're stressed, meditate.)
- **Slow down, and eat mindfully!** It takes ~20 minutes for your brain to get the message from your stomach that you've had enough to eat. Sit down, eat slowly, and pay attention to (and enjoy) every mouthful. Separate eating from other activities (like studying, talking on the phone, or running to class) so you can focus on hearing your body's physiological signals.
- **Plan ahead!** Healthy eating doesn't just happen; you have to make it happen. Take time to plan nourishing meals and snacks. Keep in mind that your body needs to re-fuel every 3-5 hours.
- **Maintain perspective!** Realize that what you eat at one meal or on one day does not make or break anyone's eating plan. It's normal to sometimes eat more (or less) than what we physiologically need. But, don't worry, it takes days and days of over (or under) eating to affect your health or weight.