

Solutions

Health and Wellness Information from
Family Services Employee Assistance Programs (FSEAP)

September 2013
Newsletter



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Celebrating Healthy Eating

September is a busy month; we return to our normal work schedules after summer and other activities get started for the fall season - both for ourselves and our families. Many of us have also set new goals and 'New Year's' type resolutions regarding fitness, weight and eating habits. But how can we ensure that our efforts at improving our personal health and eating remain positive and not detrimental to our overall wellbeing?

Today's society places a huge emphasis on what we eat and how much we weigh. Media images that help to create idealized definitions of beauty and attractiveness are often acknowledged as being among those factors contributing to the rise in confusion about eating and body image. We strive to "look good" hoping this will also make us "feel good". However, being thinner, even if we know how to successfully accomplish it, will not necessarily make us healthier or happier.

The unnaturally thin ideal portrayed in the media is far from a healthy ideal, both psychologically and physically. It becomes difficult for us to appreciate that healthy, happy people come in different shapes and sizes. And when we focus on food as a way to achieve a certain body image, we leave ourselves open to disordered eating issues. Eating disorders are complex conditions arising from a variety of physical, psychological, interpersonal, and social issues. Clinical eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, binge eating disorder and bulimia are recognized medical conditions that can affect both men and women.

Other issues, including chronic restrained eating, compulsive eating, habitual dieting, emotional eating, and food and weight preoccupation, are also a growing concern. It is difficult to develop healthy self esteem and feel good about ourselves if we hate our bodies.

Disordered eating has negative effects on our emotional, social and physical health. It can cause us to feel tired and depressed, decrease our mental functioning

and concentration, and can lead to malnutrition, putting bone health, physical growth and brain development at risk. Also, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours related to managing our food and weight can interfere with our everyday activities at work and at home; this can result in poor performance at work, social withdrawal, reduced sexual interest, and impaired concentration and judgment.

For the sake of our health and well-being, we may need to shift our attention to adopting healthy behaviours and building a positive sense of self, rather than just controlling our weight. We've provided tips and resources for you to consider.

Prevention of Disordered Eating

What is the key to healthy change and disorder prevention? The following list can help you practice new ways of looking more healthfully and happily at yourself and your body.

1. Appreciate all that your body can do –running, dancing, breathing, laughing, dreaming, etc.
2. Keep a top-ten list of things you like about yourself that aren't related to how much you weigh or what you look like.
3. When you see yourself in a mirror choose not to focus on specific body parts.
4. Surround yourself with positive people to feel good about yourself and your body.
5. Replace those voices in your head that tell you your body is not "right" or that you are a "bad" person with positive affirmations about your positive qualities.
6. Be critical of social and media messages. Refuse to accept images, slogans, or attitudes that make you feel bad about yourself or your body.
7. Do something nice for yourself--something that lets your mind and body know you appreciate you.
8. Use the time and energy you might have spent worrying about food, calories, and your weight to do something to help others.

fseap Now we're
talking.

WHAT THE EFAP CAN DO. If you are experiencing emotional or mental health issues, particularly if they are lasting and do not seem to resolve, it is important you talk to someone who can help. Your EFAP is just a call away. We can connect you with supports and services that can make a difference in how you feel and manage the challenges of daily life at home and at work.



Resources:

- 1. Canada's Food Guide:** Download or order your copy, and click on the 'Create My Food Guide' to create a customized food plan you can print and follow.
- 2. National Eating Disorder Information Centre:** Access excellent information on eating and eating disorder issues ranging from body image and social and media pressure to support and treatment. www.nedic.ca
- 3. Book: *Crave: Why you Binge Eat and How to Stop* by Cynthia M Bulik.** Crave helps you understand why you desire specific foods, recognize things that trigger your strong urges, and learn how to "curb the crave".

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With over 20 years clinical experience Jung brings a broad range expertise to her work as an EAP Counsellor. She holds certifications in many therapeutic modalities, is a Registered Clinical Counsellor, and a Registered Marriage and Family Therapist.

How Your EFAP Can Help

- Confidential services
- Information to help with work and life
- Immediate assistance 24/7/365

To access EFAP services, just call
 1.800.667.0993 | TTY 1.888.234.0414

Promoting Healthy Eating

Rather than planning a strict diet that is hard to sustain, many dieticians and health experts recommend a balanced approach to eating. One example is the new Canada Food Guide that lays out a simple framework for healthy eating: Eat a plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; choose foods with healthy fats, like olive and canola oil, nuts and fatty fish; limit red meat and foods that are high in saturated fat; and avoid foods that contain trans fats. Drink water and other healthy beverages, and limit sugary drinks and salt. Most important of all is balancing calorie intake with daily or weekly exercise.

Available from Health Canada for free in both print and digital formats, the guide provides healthy eating advice and guidelines on food options and daily portions. Here are their top tips:

- **Vegetables and Fruits:** Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day. Go for dark green vegetables such as broccoli, romaine lettuce, and spinach.
- **Grain Products:** Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day. Eat a variety of whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.
- **Milk and Alternatives:** Drink skim, 1% or 2% milk each day.
- **Meat and Alternatives:** Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often. Eat at least two servings of fish each week.
- **Satisfy thirst with water:** Drink water regularly. It's a calorie free way to quench your thirst.

Did you know?

Your EAP's Work-Life Services include **Nutrition Counselling**? Call today if you are concerned about your relationship with food, or want to create a healthy eating plan. As well, our counselling services can help you learn to address impulsive eating, develop a better body image, and increase your self esteem.

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