

Listening to Eating Disorders

IBCD Conference

June 25-27, 2015

Defining Eating Disorders

Write out a definition for eating disorders from your perspective:

DSM-V Definitions:

Anorexia Nervosa

- Restriction of energy intake relative to requirements leading to a significantly low body weight in the context of age, sex, developmental trajectory, and physical health. Significantly low weight is defined as a weight that is less than minimally normal, or, for children and adolescents, less than that minimally expected.
- Intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat, or persistent behavior that interferes with weight gain, even though at a significantly low weight.
- Disturbance in the way in which one's body weight or shape is experienced, undue influence of body weight or shape on self-evaluation, or persistent lack of recognition of the seriousness of the current low body weight.

Bulimia Nervosa

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating. An episode of binge eating is characterized by both of the following:
 - Eating, in a discrete period of time, an amount of food that is definitely larger than most people would eat in a similar period of time under similar circumstances
 - A sense of lack of control over eating during the episode
- Recurrent inappropriate compensatory behavior in order to prevent weight gain, such as self-induced vomiting; misuse of laxatives, diuretics, or other medications, fasting; or excessive exercise.

- The binge eating and inappropriate compensatory behaviors both occur, on average, at least once a week for 3 months.
- Self-evaluation is unduly influenced by body shape and weight.

Binge Eating Disorder

- Recurrent episodes of binge eating. An episode of binge eating is characterized by both of the following:
 - Eating, in a discrete period of time, an amount of food that is definitely larger than most people would eat in a similar period of time under similar circumstances
 - A sense of lack of control over eating during the episode
- The binge-eating episodes are associated with three (or more) of the following:
 - eating much more rapidly than normal
 - eating until feeling uncomfortably full
 - eating large amounts of food when not feeling physically hungry
 - eating alone because of feeling embarrassed by how much one is eating
 - feeling disgusted with oneself, depressed, or very guilty afterwards
- Marked distress regarding binge eating is present.
- The binge eating occurs, on average, at least once a week for three months.

Evaluating the DSM-V Definitions

What is helpful about these definitions?

What is potentially harmful about these definitions?

Popular Definitions:

Anorexia

The practice of intentional, voluntary, self-starvation.

A Biblical Proposal: An idolatrous desire for being physically thin, resulting in intentional, voluntary, self-starvation.

Bulimia

A habitual cycle of behavior characterized by eating large quantities of food and then inducing vomiting or some other form of purge.

A Biblical Proposal: An idolatrous desire for both losing weight and for eating food, resulting in periodic binge eating and subsequent purging of some form.

Overeating

Regularly consuming more food than is physically required.

A Biblical Proposal: An idolatrous desire for eating food, resulting in periodic binge eating or regularly excessive food consumption.

Spiritual “Eating” Issues

A Biblical Proposal: An idolatrous desire for either eating certain food, or for attaining a certain body type/size.

Helpful Questions

- Why am I eating?
- Why am I *not* eating?
- Why am I choosing to eat what I’m eating?
- Do these choices seek to glorify God?

Listening to Eating Disorders and Disorderly Eating

You cannot hope to answer these questions, or to understand someone's struggle with eating by diagnosing or defining their problem. You must listen to them.

The Personal Experience of Eating Disorders

Control

Fear

Unrealistic Evaluations (Self-Image)

Denial

Secrecy

Hopelessness

Anger

The Physical Experience of Eating Disorders¹

Anorexia

Mental Function

Without adequate nutrition, the brain cannot function normally. When people have the delusional idea that they are fat, when they are not, perhaps this is at least partially caused by a processing error of a starving brain.

Cardiovascular Function

With starvation, the heart physically shrinks and weakens.

Digestive Function

With inadequate nutrition, an anorexic patient may have deficiencies in the proteins from which digestive enzymes are made in the pancreas in liver. As a result, digestion is impaired, which can cause bloating, which can be perceived as weight gain.

Kidney Function

As a result of a weakened heart, poor perfusion, and poor nutrition, an anorexic patient's kidneys may be unable to clear the blood of toxic wastes, and this failure contributes to further metabolic collapse.

Bulimia

Mental Function

If purging is excessive, confusion and disorientation may result, usually due to salt and water imbalance. Seizures are also a possibility.

Cardiovascular Function

The salt and water imbalances in a bulimic causes a greater risk to cardiac arrest.

Digestive Function

Frequent vomiting may result in inflammation of the esophagus. Laxative abuse can cause the colon to become weak and dilated. And a common occurrence in bulimia is the erosion of teeth, because of the constant bathing in stomach acid.

¹This section adapted from: Raymond Vath, *Counseling Those with Eating Disorders*

Overeating

Mental Function

An excess of food can often cause laziness and physical lethargy as well as great discomfort.

Cardiovascular Function

Overeating leads to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and a much greater risk of heart disease

Digestive Function

Overeating can lead to the development of Type-II Diabetes as the pancreas cannot produce enough insulin to combat the amount of sugar being consumed.

The Cultural Experience of Eating Disorders in the World

Bulimia as an Acceptable Form of Weight-Control

An Obsession With Physical Beauty

A Latent Acceptance (and promotion) of Overeating

Theory of Chemical Imbalance

Conceptualization as a "Disease"

The Cultural Experience of Eating Disorders in the Church

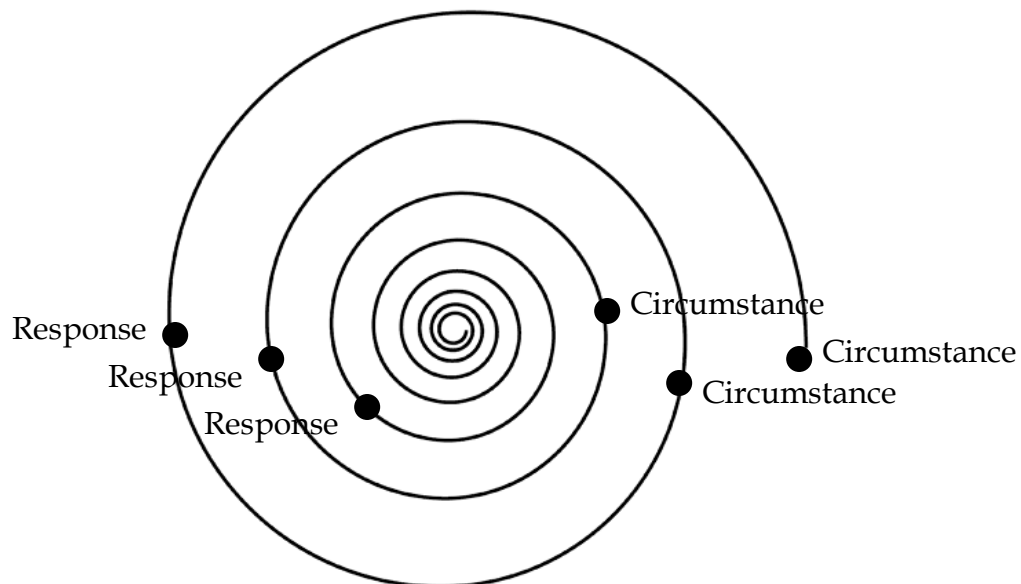
Gluttony as a Non-Sin

Anorexia / Bulimia Subtly Encouraged or Ignored

A Cultural Obsession With Physical Beauty

Psychologized Solutions (Devoid of the Gospel)

Eating Disorders: Suffering and Sin



Our suffering and our sin combine in this evil dance to drive us into these unhealthy and sinful habits in our eating.

While recognizing the extent to which our suffering and sin have contributed to cause such a significant problem can seem overwhelming, in categorizing the known contributors to our depression in this way provides great hope because:

- The good news of Jesus Christ is sufficient to redeem our suffering
- The good news of Jesus Christ is sufficient to redeem us from our sin

In light of the gospel, there is hope in the midst of both our suffering and our sin.

The Gospel and Suffering

What does the gospel teach us about suffering and how we can relate to it as Christians?

James 1:2-4, 12-14

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Why is the Christian who is struggling with their eating called to "joy"?

How should the Christian who is struggling with their eating consider their trials all joy?

What does steadfastness look like in the midst of disorderly eating?

How should "relief" be viewed in light of a biblical view of suffering?

Romans 5:2-4

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

What does suffering produce in the Christian?

How does suffering produce what it produces?

How should we think of suffering when it does not produce what God says it will produce in the life of a Christian?

The Gospel and Sin**Colossians 2:13-15**

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Colossians 3:1-4

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Colossians 3:12-14

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

What does this passage declare about the Christian who is struggling with their eating?

What do these passages instruct the Christian who is struggling with their eating to do?

What other gospel-reminders can we offer the Christian who is struggling with their eating?