

Mindful about Mental Health.

Eating Disorders – especially around Christmas time.



As the festive season approaches, it's important to recognise that for individuals and families coping with an eating disorder, the holidays can bring unique challenges and be very tricky times.

What are eating disorders?

Eating disorders are complex mental illnesses affecting people of all ages, genders, ethnicities and backgrounds - anyone can develop one. People with eating disorders use disordered eating behaviours as a way to cope with difficult situations or feelings. This behaviour can include limiting the amount of food eaten, eating very large quantities of food at once, getting rid of food eaten through unhealthy means (e.g. making themselves sick, misusing laxatives, fasting, or excessive exercise), or a combination of these behaviours.

It's important to remember that eating disorders are not all about food itself, but about feelings. The way the person treats food may make them feel more able to cope, or may make them feel in control, though they might not be aware of the purpose this behaviour is serving. An eating disorder is never the fault of the person experiencing it

Types of Eating disorders –

The most common eating disorders are anorexia nervosa. This is often referred to as anorexia. This is trying to control your weight by not eating enough food, exercising too much or both. Bulimia – this is losing control over how much to eat and then taking drastic action to avoid putting weight on. Binge eating (BED) and this is eating large proportions of food until you feel uncomfortably full.

Warning signs of an eating disorder in someone else

It can be difficult to identify this of a loved one but help and support is available.

Look out for –

- Dramatic weight loss

- Being dishonest about how much food they've ate or their weight.
- Going to the bathroom after eating regularly
- Exercising excessively
- Avoiding eating with others
- Cutting food into tiny pieces
- Wearing loose and baggy clothes to hide weight loss.

What preparation is helpful if you're coping with eating disorders at Christmas?

- Family members should try to talk about how they are feeling about Christmas openly and honestly before Christmas day.
- Try to avoid comparing this Christmas with previous years.
- It may be helpful to avoid or adjust social media, particularly if this is something that makes you feel pressure to have a 'perfect' Christmas.

If you're struggling to cope with Christmas and want to talk to someone, there is a BEAT helpline, which is open on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. This is run by trained specialists and BEAT is the national charity dedicated to supporting people with eating disorders and all those affected by them.

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>

NHS.co.uk

eating disorder experts at Schoen Clinic Newbridge

Always here and happy to help

Ms Winterton x