

What's Going On With Me?

Evaluating Eating and Exercise Habits

- **Do you spend time wishing parts of your body looked different?**
- **Do you skip meals?**
- **Do you count the calories or fat grams in anything you eat?**
- **Do you exercise so much that you are fatigued or have frequent injuries?**

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, keep reading...

Living in our culture, it's not surprising if you feel you have to look a certain way to be happy or even healthy. You may think that dieting is a normal or even necessary part of life. However, constant concern about body weight and shape, fat grams and calories can start a vicious cycle of body dissatisfaction and obsession. The things you're doing to be thin can quickly *spin out of control* and become a serious, life-threatening eating disorder.

Just because you weigh yourself, skip meals, count calories, or over-exercise doesn't necessarily mean that you have an eating disorder. But you may be dealing with what's called "disordered eating."

What is Disordered Eating?

Disordered eating is when a person's attitudes about food, weight, and body size lead to very rigid eating and exercise habits that jeopardize one's health, happiness and safety. Disordered eating may begin as a way to lose a few pounds or get in shape, but these behaviors can quickly get out of control, become obsessions, and may even turn into an eating disorder. Even if you don't have a full-blown eating disorder, you may be missing out on living while you spend all your time dieting!

Wonder if you're dealing with disordered eating? Think about this...

- Do you constantly calculate numbers of fat grams and calories?
- Do you weigh yourself often and find yourself obsessed with the number on the scale?
- Do you exercise to burn off calories and not for health and enjoyment?
- Do you ever feel out of control when you are eating?
- Do your eating patterns include extreme dieting, preferences for certain foods, withdrawn or ritualized behavior at mealtime or secretive bingeing?
- Has weight loss, dieting, and/or control of food become one of your major concerns?
- Do you feel ashamed, disgusted or guilty after eating?
- Do you constantly worry about the weight, shape or size of your body?
- Do you feel like your identity and value is based on how you look or how much you weigh?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you could be dealing with disordered eating. These attitudes and behaviors can take a toll on your mental, emotional and physical well being. It is important that you start to talk about your eating habits and concerns now, rather than waiting until your situation gets more serious than you can handle.

What Do I Do Now?

Talk about it! Tell a friend, teacher, parent, coach, youth group leader, doctor, counselor, or nutritionist what you're going through. If that seems too scary or too difficult, you may want to check out the National Eating Disorders Association's Sharing with EEEase handout. It will help you plan what to say the first time you talk to someone about your eating and exercise habits. It is important to get some support to change the thoughts and behaviors you are experiencing now. It could save your life - and isn't your health and happiness worth it?

