

# Supporting Folks with Eating Disorders

In a Peer Support Context

eating  
disorders  
Nova Scotia

Body  
Peace  
CANADA



# What you can expect today

- ✦ Learn about Peer Support available through Body Peace Canada, Eating Disorders Nova Scotia's free national support program
- ✦ Understand more about eating disorders, and who is impacted
- ✦ Learn about strategies for creating a safer space for those with lived experience of an eating disorder



# Peer Support and Eating Disorders Nova Scotia

- Started 25 years ago with a single peer support group
- Tried many variations, made lots of mistakes!
- Currently offering:
  - Five Drop-in Peer Support Groups
  - Individual Peer Mentoring (Age 14+)
  - Family Peer Support - Individual and Group

All our Peer Support programs are available across Canada through our national program Body Peace Canada.

[www.BodyPeaceCanada.ca](http://www.BodyPeaceCanada.ca)

**Body**  
**Peace**  
CANADA



# About Eating Disorders

- **Serious and complex brain based illnesses**
- **Affect both your physical and mental health**
- **Impact your ability to function in important areas of your life**
- **Result in intense and prolonged emotional distress.**

## **Eating disorders include:**

- **Anorexia Nervosa**
- **Binge Eating Disorder**
- **Bulimia**
- **Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)**
- **Atypical Anorexia**

# About Eating Disorders

Although Eating Disorders can be successfully treated, only 1 in 10 people with an eating disorder ever receive specialized treatment.

*What keeps folks from seeking treatment?*

- Shame, stigma and isolation
- Weight bias

*How can we make getting help easier on folks?*

- Earlier intervention
- Welcoming, person-centred care (Like peer support!)
- Support for everybody and every body.

# About Eating Disorders

## Understanding Eating Disorders

- Binge Eating Disorder = Restricting + Binge Eating
- Bulimia Nervosa = Restricting + Binge Eating + Purging
- Anorexia (& Atypical Anorexia) = Restricting and/or Over Exercising

Most eating disorders start with, or involve food restriction.

Disordered Eating is the #1 risk factor for the development of an Eating Disorder. Common for both can include feelings of shame, hating your body, a sense loss of control around food and intense and prolonged emotional distress.

# Diet Culture

- A belief system that worships thinness and food restriction and associates it with health, morality, social status and value as a human being.
- Results in a culture where disordered eating thrives and eating disorders can hide as “healthy”
- Diet Culture is:
  - All around us and hard to ignore
  - Related to discrimination of fat bodies, people of colour, those with disabilities
  - An industry that profits off us hating our bodies





# Who develops eating disorders?

Both society and media tend to paint the picture of an individual with an eating disorder as a white, young, affluent woman who is extremely thin.

**In actuality, anyone can struggle with an eating disorder.**



# Who develops eating disorders?

- Members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
- Those experiencing food insecurity
- Those who live in larger bodies
- Racialized communities
- Men and boys
- And women and girls

# Eating Disorders Pop Quiz

Eating Disorders impact one in \_\_\_\_\_ people:

- A) 12
- B) 21
- C) 58
- D) 100



# Eating Disorders Pop Quiz



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# Eating Disorders Pop Quiz



This is the least common type of eating disorder:

- A) Anorexia Nervosa
- B) Bulimia
- C) Binge Eating Disorder
- D) Atypical Anorexia



# Eating Disorders Pop Quiz



This is the least common type of eating disorder:

A) Anorexia Nervosa

B) Bulimia

C) Binge Eating Disorder

D) Atypical Anorexia



# Eating Disorders Pop Quiz

Eating disorders generally impact this group:

- A) White, teenage girls
- B) Members of the LGBTQ+ community
- C) Members of BIPOC communities
- D) All of the above



# Eating Disorders Pop Quiz

Eating disorders generally impact this group:

- A) White, teenage girls
- B) Members of the LGBTQ+ community
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- D) All of the above



# Eating Disorders Pop Quiz



Most people with eating disorders have this in common:

- A) Desire to be thin
- B) Weight loss
- C) A pattern of restrictive eating
- D) Heavy use of Instagram and other social media



# Eating Disorders Pop Quiz



Most people with eating disorders have this in common:

A) Desire to be thin

B) Weight loss

C) A pattern of restrictive eating

D) Heavy use of Instagram and other social media



# Facts to consider

- Virtually **all** eating disorders start with food **restriction**.
- One's risk of developing an eating disorder **increases 18X** with repeated food restriction
- Eating disorders are the **3<sup>rd</sup>** most common mental illness
- Eating disorders have the **highest mortality rate** out of all mental illnesses

# Group Discussion

Thinking about the Core Values of Peer Support...

- Hope and Recovery
- Self-Determination
- Dignity, Respect and Social Inclusion
- Empathetic and Equal Relationships
- Integrity, Authenticity and Trust
- Lifelong Learning and Personal Growth

How can we use these to create a safer space for folks with lived experience of an eating disorder or disordered eating?

# Creating a Safer Space

*Through the values of Peer Support*

- Open the conversation while respecting personal choice to share
- Don't assume you know their relationship to food, or who has or doesn't have an eating disorder
- If sharing your lived experience, do so from a recovery perspective (avoid the numbers game)
- Don't downplay or normalize disordered eating/eating disorders
- Remember that eating disorders are serious illnesses and that recovery\* is always possible

*Self-determination*

*Hope and Recovery*

# Creating a Safer Space

*Through the values of Peer Support*

- Use person first language
- Stop diet-talk and body shaming
- Involve the individual in non-food focused, social activities
- Don't make comments on people's bodies or eating
- Learn about about EDs, weight stigma, discrimination, fatphobia, and thin privilege.
- Reflect on your own weight bias and how that might be impacting your relationships with others
- Learn about where folks can go for Eating Disorders support

*Dignity, Respect and Social Inclusion  
Integrity, Authenticity and Trust  
Empathetic and Equal Relationships*

**Lifelong Learning and Personal Growth**

# Creating a Safer Space

## *Strategies for organizations*

- ✓ Develop clear role expectations and descriptions while maintaining flexibility in role activity
- ✓ Provide robust training, support, and supervision to support safe and effective peer work

*We have monthly team meetings, self-reflections, check in calls, and a intensive 5 week virtual training.*

- ✓ Recruitment strategies and selection criteria should be relevant to the position and to safety concerns for peer supporters and participants

*We require two years of experience with recovery to become a Mentor*

- ✓ Secure adequate resources to support peer support programs

# Creating a Safer Space



Opening the conversation with:

**“What is your relationship like with food, eating and your body?”**


**Normalizes talking about thoughts and feelings, and opens the door to connecting for support.**

**Remember, Peer Support specifically for folks with eating disorders is available free through our national program Body Peace Canada.**



# Peer Support for Eating Disorders Recovery

- Participants register once, then drop-in as needed.
- Groups are an hour long with two trained Peer Supporters facilitating.



**40+ GROUP**  
Open to adults 40 years of age or older

TUESDAYS | 7:00 PM EST




**TRANS+ GROUP**  
Open to anyone 18 years of age or older

THURSDAYS | 7:00 PM EST



**COLOURING THE CONVERSATION:  
A PEER SUPPORT GROUP**  
Open to those from BIPOC communities

LAST TUESDAY  
OF EACH MONTH | 7:00 PM EST



**ADULT GROUP**  
Open to anyone 18 years of age or older

THURSDAYS | 6:00 PM EST



**BINGE EATING GROUP**  
Open to anyone 18 years of age or older

WEDNESDAYS | 7:00 PM EST

# Actions you can take today

Stay in the loop about eating disorders supports - add your name to our monthly email list. You'll receive:

- Our Guide to Delivering Peer Support for those impacted by Eating Disorders
- Curated resources
- Upcoming events and learning opportunities
- And more!

Questions?

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SCAN ME

