



Contributing Factors to the Causes of an Eating Disorder

Someone with an eating disorder may experience one or many of the symptoms listed below.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

- Low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, perfectionism, loneliness, a very negative mindset, a sense that life is out of control, and poor coping skills to deal with any or all of the above.

INTERPERSONAL FACTORS

- Perhaps troubled relationships, difficulty in family communication due to the condition, history of trauma, teasing or bullying about their weight or size.
- Being uncomfortable with the expression of feelings.
- A lack of assertiveness.

SOCIAL FACTORS

- Social norms that emphasise and laud people of a certain low weight or small size.
- A society that places exaggeration on appearance especially one that encourages thinness.
- Social norms that places attractiveness and social acceptance on conforming to narrow physical standards.

BIOLOGICAL FACTORS

- Scientists believe that there may be a biological vulnerability to developing an eating disorder. Research continues to discover what that vulnerability may actually be. Certain neurotransmitters, hormones, and chemicals that regulate appetite, digestion and mood are currently being investigated.
- Getting a clear understanding as to the true cause/s of an eating disorder is further complicated by the behaviours that are part of the disorder. For instance the effect of severe dieting or severe restriction has both psychological, physical, and social effects (Fairburn C G, Guilford Press, New York, 2008). For example severe of food can affect the ability to concentrate, can exacerbate any existing depression or anxiety. Semi-starvation and severe dieting can also cause a preoccupation with food which in turn can result in binging.
- Therefore the 'diet' that started out as a way for the person to take control of their life, actually ends up controlling the person, and sometimes to a life threatening degree.