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### **Eating Disorders: What Every Parent Needs to Know**

Anna Hermann

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Many students enjoy their time at the Caf, but for some mealtimes are an ordeal. Eating disorders are common among college-aged students, so it's important to know the signs.

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# Eating Disorders: What Every Parent Needs to Know

*Anna Herrman '07, assistant professor of communication and media studies, researches the complicated relationship between communication, body image and eating disorders. Her work informs the advice she has to offer to parents of college-aged students.*

The National Eating Disorder Association estimates that 10 million men and 20 million women are suffering from, or will suffer from, an eating disorder. Although eating disorders are common in all ages, they are extremely prolific in college-aged students. In fact, nearly 20 percent of all college students have, or have had, an eating disorder.

These statistics are sobering, especially when the potential health consequences of an eating disorder include heart or kidney failure and even death. So what do parents of college students need to know?

### Also In This Issue

- St. Norbert Inside and Out Eating Disorders: What Every Parent Needs to Know
- Relationship Know-How for Roommates
- Campus Still Lively in January
- Photo Gallery: SNC Day / Family Weekend
- Quiz Time!

### Upcoming Events

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Nov. 22-26

Final Exams  
Dec. 11-15

J-Term Begins  
Jan. 3, 2018

Spring Semester Begins



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First, it does not matter if a student is black, white, gay, male, female or transgender. Eating disorders do not discriminate based on gender, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity. The exact cause of eating disorders is unknown, but scientists believe genetic, psychological and communicative factors all contribute to the susceptibility of this mental illness.

Second, eating disorders manifest in different ways. Generally, when people hear the term "eating disorders," they think of anorexia or bulimia. Anorexia (strictly limiting certain foods and calories, resulting in extreme weight loss) and bulimia (binge eating/vomiting) are common. But two other eating disorders you should know about are [Binge Eating Disorder \(BED\)](#) and [Other Specified Feeding and Eating Disorder \(OSFED\)](#).

BED is characterized by the frequent consumption of large amounts of calories. As the binge is occurring, the person realizes the behavior is unhealthy, but proceeds anyway. Individuals suffering with BED often feel guilty after consumption and struggle with obesity. OSFED includes other unhealthy eating behaviors such as atypical anorexia, which is when someone restricts calories and certain foods, but still remains in the average weight range.

All parents of college students should be aware of the various emotional, behavioral and physical symptoms associated with eating disorders. Emotional signs include severe mood swings, depression, anxiety or fear of eating in public. Behavioral symptoms include frequent trips to the bathroom after eating, smelling of vomit, making excuses about not eating (e.g., "I already ate"), refusing to eat and frequently looking in the mirror to check for imperfections. Physical signs may include yellowing skin, fainting episodes, fluctuation in weight (either increase or decrease), fatigue and feeling chilled.

Parents who think their student may have an eating disorder need to speak up! The importance of communication cannot be stressed enough. Such a conversation may be difficult, so here are some strategies to employ.

- Use descriptive I-statements, such as, "I feel concerned about your health" or "I have noticed you putting food in your napkin at the dinner table." This way you are taking ownership of your emotions, as well as sticking to the facts of what you have witnessed.

Jan. 22, 2018

Spring Break  
March 10-18

[Green Knights Athletics Schedule](#)

## Things You Need to Know

### Wellness Works

There's a new, allergen-friendly station in the cafeteria.

### Early FAFSA Filing

You can file the FAFSA for the 2018-19 school year now using information from your 2016 tax returns.

### Tech Bar

Students can be assisted with computer issues, plus receive skills training, at SNC's new Tech Bar.



- Refrain from offering easy solutions such as, “Just eat” or “Stop.” Eating-disorder recovery is much more than just stopping a behavior. It is a complex process that involves a significant amount of support and time to heal.
- Offer to help find a professional counselor, and realize it may take time to find the right one. SNC’s [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) center is another option.
- Listen to the student’s needs and be patient. Students may become angry or antagonistic when the subject is broached. Or they may not be ready to seek help or may be in denial that help is needed. Be prepared for such reactions. Students need to hear they are loved and their parents are always available to talk.

Further assistance is available by calling the National Eating Disorder Association hotline at 800-931-2237.

## St. Norbert College

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