



Concerned About Compulsive Exercising and Eating Disorders?

Compulsive Exercise?

Help A Friend. Help Yourself.

"Is there such a thing as too much exercise?"

Compulsive exercise is often one symptom of an eating disorder. Whether the exercise takes place at the Wellness Center or outdoors, exercise may be used by college students as a way to purge food to reduce weight. Those who have symptoms of compulsive exercise have episodes of repeatedly exercising beyond the requirement of what is considered safe, and will find time at any cost to exercise, including missing class, taking off from work, or canceling other obligations.

"Is your exercise routine compulsive?"

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, every US adult should "accumulate 30-minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days per week." For the average student, vigorously exercising more than one hour per day most days per week may be healthy and productive, but it could be considered compulsive if the following occur:

You are rigidly adhering to this routine while also participating in disordered eating behavior.

Any disruption in your routine causes feelings of intense guilt or anxiety.

You maintain the routine against the advice of a physician or therapist, or when you are ill, injured, or sleep deprived.

Maintenance of the exercise routine is interfering with your ability to complete other responsibilities, or to sustain close, healthy relationships.

"Are you combining excessive exercise with other disordered behavior?"

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By itself, excessive exercise may be dangerous-- as dangerous as fasting, bingeing, purging and/or the use of diet pills and laxatives. Combining compulsive exercise with fasting, bingeing, purging, diet pills, or nutritional supplements can lead to a number of serious physical dangers. These include heart problems, kidney failure, stroke, dehydration, stress fracture, osteoporosis, amenorrhea (loss of menstrual cycle), thyroid suppression, and exhaustion. We encourage you to seek medical help immediately if you see yourself in this description!

"Do, You Have a Challenge with Compulsive Exercise?"

Answer These Questions...

1. While exercising, are you excessively concerned with the specific number of calories you must burn?
2. Do you exercise on days when you are injured, ill, or sleep deprived?
3. Do you feel guilty, anxious and/or 'fat' if you miss a day of exercise?
4. Do you feel guilty when you overeat and punish yourself with extra exercise or fasting?
5. Do you weigh yourself often and does the number on the scale dictate your mood and/or self-worth for the day; and/or do you find you are continuously trying to get that number lower?
6. Are you secretive about your eating or exercise practices?
7. Would you worry about a friend or family member that came to you with similar exercise or weight-loss/coping methods?

If you answer 'yes' to a majority of these questions, consider accessing some of the available resources.

Web sites offering support:

www.something-fishy.org
www.anred.com

Support on campus:

Counseling Center (305) 284-5511
Health Center (appointment) (305) 284-5927

How to help a friend who is suffering from an eating disorder

There are many things you cannot do to help a friend to get better.

You cannot force an anorexic to eat.
You cannot make a compulsive exerciser stop exercising.
You cannot keep a bulimic from purging.

If you suspect that your friend suffers from an eating disorder, it is important not to bully, judge or nag. All forms of eating disorders are emotionally based, and the behaviors are symptoms of emotional and stress-related problems (an attempt to control, hide, avoid and forget emotional pain, stress and/or self-hate).

Each sufferer needs to find the mode of recovery that works best for him or her. There are many options out there, including individual therapy, support groups, in-patient or out-patient treatment clinics, or a combination of these. Refer your friend to the Counseling Center at (305) 284-5511 or Health Center at (305) 284-5927 for a professional consultation. You can also obtain further information online at: www.miami.edu/canecares

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