Feeling out of control from binge eating [1]

Hi Alice,

I suffer from overeating constantly and binge eating. I've gained a considerable amount of weight and have tried to get my eating under control as a result, but when I try to stick to a diet, all I think about is food. I can't stop thinking about food until I eat something; when I try to ignore it, the urge doesn't go away. It's hard to think about anything else, so I usually give in. I feel out of control, like food controls my life, and like I'll never get my weight down to a weight I'm comfortable with. I don't have health insurance, so I can't get psychotherapy. How can I get my eating under control? Do you know of any free accessible resources I can use like books or websites that would be helpful?

Answer

Dear Reader,

The situation you describe is, unfortunately, all too common. That is to say, you are most definitely not alone in your feelings of not being in control and having the sense that food controls your life. Disordered eating [2], including binge eating disorder, is an issue that affects approximately 20 million women and 10 million men at some point during their lives. While there are a number of helpful online resources that can help, it's highly recommended that you consult with a mental health professional about treatment. Fortunately, there are several reduced-cost treatment options [3] you can take advantage of to help you on your road to recovery.

Let's start with the online resources. The National Eating Disorder Association [4] (NEDA) has a wealth of resources for people who struggle with eating disorders. Beyond the information on their website, the NEDA runs an Information and Referral Helpline [5] through which you can connect with staff members who can help you find treatment programs, support groups, and other information specific to your situation. NEDA also allows you to search for treatment services with sliding scale payment options and runs an interactive website just for teens [6].

Other affordable options for treatment are training institutes [7] accredited by the American Psychoanalytic Association. These institutes allow people to receive psychotherapy from therapists in training. This treatment comes with a low price tag, sometimes only $10 to $15 per session, or is priced on a sliding scale basis.
As far as the issue of weight gain goes, working with a professional, in addition to figuring out the underlying reasons behind your overeating, will help you become more comfortable with your body. Restrictive dieting is usually not the best approach, as it can be an unhealthy and ineffective method of losing weight. Finally, eating healthfully, exercising regularly, and getting enough sleep are great first steps and will positively complement other treatments such as therapy.

Hope this is helpful,

Alice!

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