



# Myths Surrounding Eating Disorders Debunked



**Misinformation about Eating Disorders can sometimes be as harmful as the disorder itself. Below are a list of some of the most common myths and the real facts around them.**

**Myth:** Eating disorders are about weight loss or body image.

**Fact:** While it's true that some eating disorders are fueled by the individuals need to be "thin and attractive", there are many other types of contributing factors such as psychological (depression, low self-esteem, stress, anxiety), a sense of a loss of control causing an individual to attempt to regain control over one aspect of their life (eating), biological factors, perfectionism, and a history of abuse.

**Myth:** Men don't suffer from eating disorders.

**Fact:** At least 1 out of every 10 people with an eating disorder is male. In fact, within certain diagnostic categories like Binge Eating Disorder, men represent as many as 40% of those affected. In a recently released report from the American Academy of Pediatrics, boys and men were cited as one of the groups seeing the fastest rise in eating disorders over the past 10 years. It's equally important to screen for eating disorders among females and males.

**Myth:** Eating disorders only can occur in adolescent females.

**FACT:** Eating disorders do not discriminate based on age. Individuals of all ages suffer from disordered eating and choose to seek treatment. The average age of BANA's clients is 34.8 but we serve ages 0 and up.

**Myth:** Eating Disorders are a lifestyle choice; someone can choose to stop having an eating disorder.

**Fact:** Eating disorders are serious illnesses with mental and physical consequences that often involve a great deal of suffering. Someone can make the choice to pursue recovery, but the act of recovery itself is a lot of hard work and involves more than simply deciding to not act on symptoms. In most cases, the eating disorder has become a person's primary way of coping with intense emotions and difficult life events. In order to heal from the eating disorder, a person needs appropriate treatment and support regarding medical monitoring, nutritional rehabilitation as well as learning and practicing healthier ways to manage stress.

**Myth:** Purging is an effective way to lose weight.

**Fact:** Purging does not result in ridding the body of ingested food. At least half of what is consumed during a binge typically remains in the body even after self-induced vomiting. It's important to know that laxatives do not prevent the body from absorbing calories either because they impact the large intestine and most calories are absorbed in the small intestine. Laxatives may provide an illusion of weight loss because they stimulate a temporary loss of fluids from the body which can lead to dehydration. Purging does not cause weight loss, nor does it prevent weight gain. In fact, over time, the binge/purge cycle can actually contribute to increased or accelerated weight gain as it affects the body's metabolic rate. For these reasons, many people with bulimia are average or above-average weight.

**Myth:** Eating Disorders are a result of over controlling parents and dysfunctional families.

**Fact:** In the past, parents were often blamed for an individual's eating disorder but new research and conventional wisdom have helped to dispel this myth. We now know that between 50-80% of a person's risk for developing an eating disorder is due to genetic factors. We also know that parents and families can play an integral role in helping a