



Eating Disorder Awareness Week - our thoughts

This week, the last week in February, has been designated Eating Disorders Awareness Week - EDAW - an international awareness event to fight the myths and misunderstandings that surround anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder. These illnesses cause untold psychological damage to individuals and can be life-threatening. Such disorders significantly reduce personal achievement within schools, further education and occupationally as well as having an economic cost within the workplace.

Eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia and binge eating are not confined to fashion models under professional pressure to stay thin. The ideal physical self-images beamed to us every single day through TV, media and on the internet create unrealistic expectations of how far we can alter our body shape - and create anxiety to conform for every single young person within a school. We all need to be aware of the pressures on young people's body images and the difficulties - often imaginary - created by individuals striving to achieve the impossible.

Eating disorders can be seen as a cry for help by a person in distress who is unable to voice the exact cause. Their problem manifests itself as an eating disorder, for which the usual practical solutions may not be appropriate. That is why awareness and empathy for the complications

of a psychological illness are essential. The advice and support for those with eating disorders equally needs to be professionally guided.

Eating disorders usually have a psychological trigger. Particularly during adolescence, the problem of self -image, ideal 'look' and optimum weight bring sometimes unbearable pressure, especially within school where the expectations to conform and achieve are strongest.

Eating disorders need to be spotted and concerns acted upon. There are strategies and treatments available to help individuals through the stress but only with cooperation of all concerned - the young person, the parents, teaching staff alongside the support from counselling and CAMHS involvement.

So what to do?

What can we all do?

As we all know prevention is better than cure. So often, young people develop eating disorders because of a fear of not being good enough, not being able to find their voice and feeling isolated. Helping young people develop and nurture their resilience is paramount. Helping parents express their approval and acceptance of their children in unconditional ways is ideal. Helping teachers moderate and manage the pressures young people face academically and personally is integral to a healthy school.

If you're interested in any of these areas or anything else about eating disorders but don't know where to start give us a ring or drop us an email. We will be able to help

One side-effect of a dangerously poor self-image is the risk of self-injury. Pupils can – often secretly – scratch or cut themselves to gain a kind of comfort from the self-harming they are inflicting on the body they no longer feel comfortable with. In extreme

cases, apparently accidental self-injury can lead to hospitalization for serious and permanent injury. Self-injury awareness day is next week – March 1st. Raising awareness leads to a better understanding of the problem and encourages empathy for a problem often suffered in loneliness and the lowest self-esteem.

As you will see from our website, professional advice from a specialist clinical team *yourschoolmind* – medical and nursing experts - experienced in working with young people will ensure you can build for your school an effective strategy for depression, stress, bullying, autism and self-harm.

Your School Mind can bring a professional clinical mental health in education service to your school.

Contact us directly on the website to arrange for us to give you a free short powerpoint presentation meeting in your school, to discuss your needs (you should allow an hour for full discussion). Our visits to schools so far have focused discussion of concerns and we have been able to equip schools with solutions. We look forward to hearing from you and visiting your school.

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