

Get the straightforward facts on eating disorders
and develop a safe, healthy recovery plan

Eating Disorders

FOR
DUMMIES[®]



*You can't
measure pain
on a scale*

Susan Schulherr, LCSW

Psychotherapist specializing in eating disorders

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®



**FREE eTips at
dummies.com**

Get the straightforward facts on eating disorders
and develop a safe, healthy recovery plan

Eating Disorders

FOR

DUMMIES®



*You can't
measure pain
on a scale*

Susan Schulherr, LCSW
Psychotherapist specializing in eating disorders

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®



FREE eTips at
dummies.com®

Eating Disorders For Dummies®

by Susan Schulherr



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Eating Disorders For Dummies®

Published by

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

111 River St.

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2008 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.,
Indianapolis, Indiana

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-646-8600. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Legal Department, Wiley Publishing, Inc., 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, 317-572-3447, fax 317-

572-4355, or online at
<http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, the Wiley Publishing logo, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, A Reference for the Rest of Us!, The Dummies Way, Dummies Daily, The Fun and Easy Way, Dummies.com and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries, and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Wiley Publishing, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: The contents of this work are intended to further general scientific research, understanding, and discussion only and are not intended and should not be relied upon as recommending or promoting a specific method, diagnosis, or treatment by physicians for any particular patient. The publisher and the author make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. In view of ongoing research, equipment modifications, changes in governmental regulations, and the constant flow of information relating to the use of medicines, equipment, and devices, the reader is urged to review and evaluate the

information provided in the package insert or instructions for each medicine, equipment, or device for, among other things, any changes in the instructions or indication of usage and for added warnings and precautions. Readers should consult with a specialist where appropriate. The fact that an organization or Website is referred to in this work as a citation and/or a potential source of further information does not mean that the author or the publisher endorses the information the organization or Website may provide or recommendations it may make. Further, readers should be aware that Internet Websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. No warranty may be created or extended by any promotional statements for this work. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for any damages arising herefrom.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

For technical support, please visit
www.wiley.com/techsupport.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008921210

ISBN: 978-0-470-22549-3

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2



About the Author

Susan Schulherr, LCSW, is a licensed clinical social worker who has had a private psychotherapy practice in New York City for nearly 30 years. She has worked with people with eating disorders for over 20 of those years. Her chapter on treating binge eating disorder appears in the 2005 book, *EMDR Solutions: Pathways to Healing* (Shapiro, Norton). Her article, "The Binge-Diet Cycle: Shedding New Light, Finding New Exits," was published in *Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention* (1998). She has presented workshops at the local and national level on eating disorders and on issues of weight and eating to both professional and nonprofessional audiences.

Ms. Schulherr is a trained family and couples therapist. She has extensive experience in the trauma specialty approaches of EMDR and Somatic Experiencing, each of which she has adapted for the treatment of eating disorders.

Author's Acknowledgments

I owe some particular thank you's now that this project that once felt so far off is a reality. For the collaborative outpouring that became the text of this book, my thanks to the indefatigable editorial staff at Wiley Publishing: Tracy Boggier, Stephen Clark, Christy Pingleton, and to Misty Rees for her technical review. For presenting me with the opportunity to participate in the first place, my special appreciation to literary agent Margot Maley Hutchison from Waterside Productions, Inc. For concept-to-completion professional feedback and moral support without which my part in this project would have been impossible, endless gratitude to Nancy J. Napier, LMFT.

I always wish to extend heartfelt thanks to the many clients and others who have shared their eating disorder stories and struggles with me over the years. All that you have taught me has made its way into this volume and inspired me with the possibilities for healing even in the most difficult situations.

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

Acquisitions, Editorial, and Media Development

Project Editor: Stephen R. Clark

Acquisitions Editor: Tracy Boggier

Copy Editor: Christy Pingleton

Editorial Program Coordinator: Erin Calligan Mooney

Technical Editors: Misty L. Rees, BS, CEDS, Program Director, Selah House, www.selahhouse.net

Editorial Manager: Christine Meloy Beck

Editorial Assistants: Joe Niesen, David Lutton

Cartoons: Rich Tennant (www.the5thwave.com)

Composition Services

Project Coordinator: Katie Key

Layout and Graphics: Reuben W. Davis, Alissa D. Ellet, Melissa K. Jester, Christine Williams

Proofreaders: Context Editorial Services, Inc., Cynthia Fields

Indexer: Potomac Indexing, LLC

Publishing and Editorial for Consumer Dummies

Diane Graves Steele, Vice President and Publisher,
Consumer Dummies

Joyce Pepple, Acquisitions Director, Consumer Dummies

Kristin A. Cocks, Product Development Director, Consumer Dummies

Michael Spring, Vice President and Publisher, Travel

Kelly Regan, Editorial Director, Travel

Publishing for Technology Dummies

Andy Cummings, Vice President and Publisher, Dummies Technology/General User

Composition Services

Gerry Fahey, Vice President of Production Services

Debbie Stailey, Director of Composition Services

Contents

Title

[Introduction](#)

[About This Book](#)

[Conventions Used in This Book](#)

[What You're Not to Read](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[How This Book Is Organized](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

Part I : Eating Disorders: An All-Consuming World of Their Own

[Chapter 1: Understanding Eating Disorders](#)

[Getting a Sense of the Problem](#)

[Classifying the Eating Disorders](#)

[Seeing What's Behind the Symptoms](#)

[Seeing the Damage Eating Disorders Do](#)

[Scoping the Rise in Eating Disorders](#)

[Getting Better Is an Option](#)

[Chapter 2: Getting Insight into Anorexia Nervosa](#)

[Putting Anorexia Nervosa into Words](#)

[Looking at Anorexia's Behavioral Traits](#)

[Seeing Anorexia's Psychological Traits](#)

[Determining Whether You Have Anorexia](#)

[Chapter 3: Seeing Inside Bulimia Nervosa](#)

[Identifying the Many Faces Of Bulimia](#)

[Recognizing Bulimia's Behavioral Traits](#)

[Seeing Bulimia's Psychological Traits](#)

[Determining Whether You Have Bulimia](#)

[Chapter 4: Understanding Binge Eating Disorder](#)

[Defining Binge Eating Disorder](#)

[Understanding the Behavioral Features of Binge Eating](#)

[Seeing BED's Psychological Traits](#)

[Determining Whether You Have BED](#)

[Chapter 5: Eating Disorder Risk Factors](#)

[Looking at Family Traits that May Influence Eating Disorders](#)

[Looking at Your Individual Vulnerability](#)

[Zapping the Brain with Hormones](#)

[A Culture that Breeds Eating Disorders](#)

[Dieting as the Gateway to Eating Disorders](#)

[Chapter 6: Deconstructing Your Body with an Eating Disorder](#)

[Disordering Your Body from the Inside Out with Starvation](#)

[Wearing Your Body Down with Purging](#)

[Reversing the Effects with Recovery](#)

[Chapter 7: Sidekicks That Often Accompany Eating Disorders](#)

[Altering Thoughts and Perceptions](#)

[Recognizing Other Disorders That Require Treatment](#)

[Adding Addictions to Your Eating Disorder](#)

Part II : Getting Well: Exploring Recovery and Treatment Options

Chapter 8: Seeing What Recovery Looks Like

Finding Balance in Recovery

Maintaining a Healthy Weight

Menstruating Normally

Seeing Bingeing or Purging Symptoms Subside

Getting Thinking Processes Normal

Eating Well with No Forbidden Foods

Exercising in a Healthy Way

Creating Healthy Relationships

Tolerating Your Emotions

Maintaining a Healthy Self-Image

Chapter 9: Deciding the Who, What, and Where for Treatment

Finding the Right Therapist

Assembling Your Team

Determining the Intervention You Need

Getting a Good Medical Work-Up

Making a Plan for Your Treatment

Choosing Where to Get Treatment

Exploring Experiential Therapies

Chapter 10: Finding the Treatment Approach That's Right for You

Choosing Your Eating Disorder Treatment

Concentrating on Cognitive- Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Delving into Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)

Setting Your Sights on Psychodynamic Therapy

[Focusing on Feminist Therapy](#)

[Investigating Interpersonal Therapy \(IPT\)](#)

[Getting to the Bottom of “Bottom-Up” Therapies](#)

[Taking to the Trenches with Trauma Treatment](#)

[Chapter 11: Including Other People in Your Treatment](#)

[Family Therapy: Everybody Gets into the Act](#)

[Couples Therapy: Just the Two of Us](#)

[Group Therapy: Safety in Numbers](#)

[Self-Help Groups: Grass Roots Support](#)

[Chapter 12: Exploring Medication and Other Approaches](#)

[Getting Your Biology on Board with Medication](#)

[Exploring New Frontiers in Eating Disorder Treatment](#)

[Chapter 13: Making Good Use of the Approach You Choose](#)

[Letting Go of Magic for Reality](#)

[Substituting Recovery Goals for Eating Disorder Goals](#)

[Partnering with Your Therapist in a Treatment-Boosting Way](#)

[Making the Most of Groups](#)

[Chapter 14: Managing Early Stage Recovery and the Reality of Relapse](#)

[Stepping into the Unknown: A Recovery Overview](#)

[Building Recovery Habits and Skills](#)

[Dealing with Fear and Resistance](#)

[Rebounding from Relapse](#)

[Part III : Eating Disorders in Special Populations](#)

[Chapter 15: Eating Disorders in Males](#)

[Recognizing That Guys Suffer from Eating Disorders, Too!](#)

[Uncovering Risk Factors for Eating Disorders in Males](#)

[Gaining Awareness of Special Issues for Treatment](#)

[Chapter 16: Athletes and Eating Disorders](#)

[Running a Greater Risk for Eating Disorders](#)

[Focusing on Female Athletes](#)

[Measuring Risk for Male Athletes](#)

[Recognizing an Eating Disorder in a Child Athlete](#)

[Scoring with the Right Coach](#)

[Tackling Special Issues for Treatment](#)

[Chapter 17: Eating Disorders on the Stage, Screen, and Runway](#)

[Discovering the Risks Behind the Scenes](#)

[Considering Eating Disorders as Part of the Job](#)

[Spotlighting Special Issues for Treating Performers](#)

[Chapter 18: Eating Disorders in Children](#)

[Becoming Informed about Childhood Onset Eating Disorders](#)

[Recognizing the “Grown Up” Disorder of Anorexia in Kids](#)

[Getting Treatment for Kids](#)

[Chapter 19: Eating Disorders Later In Life](#)

[Getting Older and Trying to be Thinner](#)

[Fighting the Loss of Youth and More](#)

[Eating Disordered Over 65](#)

[Treating Eating Disorders in the 30+ Set](#)

[Chapter 20: Eating Disorders and People Who Are Obese](#)

[Being Obese and Eating Disordered](#)

[Highlighting Special Issues for Treatment](#)

Part IV : Advice and Help for Families and Others Who Care

Chapter 21: Forming a Plan to Help the Person with an Eating Disorder

Becoming Informed About Eating Disorders

Being Ready with Resources

Gathering Support

Chapter 22: Implementing Your Plan to Help

Knowing What You're Out To Accomplish

Knowing Some Important Do's

Avoiding Some Important Don'ts

Dealing with Anger and Denial

Chapter 23: Making Life Livable While Supporting Another's Recovery

Letting Go and Ending the Food Wars

Taking "Fat Talk" Off the Table

Insisting on Accountability

Focusing Outside the Eating Disorder

Breaking through Recovery Traps

Chapter 24: Finding Support for Yourself While Supporting Another's Recovery

Knowing When to Seek Treatment for Yourself

Turning Your Attention to Your Needs

Finding the Help That's Right for You

Part V : The Part of Tens

Chapter 25: Ten Don'ts: Behaviors and Thoughts to Avoid

Don't Diet

Don't Try to Fix Your Eating Disorder by Yourself

[Don't Look for a Quick Fix](#)

[Don't Do Anything that Feels Extreme](#)

[Don't Believe Your Weight Determines Your Worth](#)

[Don't Avoid Your Negative Feelings](#)

[Don't Ignore Signs of Relapse](#)

[Don't Nurture Your Fascination with "Thin"](#)

[Don't Put Things Off Until You're "Thin Enough"](#)

[Don't Stop Treatment Too Soon](#)

[Chapter 26: Ten Do's: Ways to Enhance Your Recovery](#)

[Do Practice Being Imperfect](#)

[Do Nurture Your Social Network as Part of Your Healing](#)

[Do Speak Up!](#)

[Do Be Truthful with Your Treatment Team](#)

[Do Experiment with Ways to Enjoy Being in Your Body](#)

[Do Use "Feeling Fat" as a Call to Awareness](#)

[Do Appreciate that Improvement Often Proceeds in Baby Steps](#)

[Do Keep Track of Your Accomplishments](#)

[Do Talk with Other Women about Social Pressures to Be Thin](#)

[Do Remember that People Can and Do Recover from their Eating Disorders](#)

[Resource Guide](#)

[Web Sites for Eating Disorder Information](#)

[Web Sites for Finding Treatment](#)

[Web Sites for Finding Local Support Groups](#)

[Web Sites for Size Acceptance and Self-Esteem](#)

[Self-Help Books](#)

: Further Reading

Introduction

Could this be you? You don't have much self-confidence (this applies most often to females, but males are not immune). You'd love to feel in charge of yourself, your emotions, your life. You'd do anything to be someone others love and admire. You don't feel any of these things are true — for you.

Add to this that you live in a culture that tells you the world is yours if you're thin. That you, or anyone, can become model-thin (or fat-free buff) if you just diet and exercise enough.

You may be a little precise or obsessive by nature. And you may have fewer of the natural brain hormones that buffer most people in life. You may even have a history of some kind of trauma that you have yet to resolve.

These characteristics are the ingredients for making an eating disorder. Because you feel vulnerable, an eating disorder is, above all else, the way you struggle against internal doubts, trying to cope. Dieting is how you try to put together a sense of control and self-esteem. Bingeing is how you comfort yourself or respond to the extremes of dieting. You have come to rely on your eating disorder symptoms so completely that the thought of surrendering them is terrifying — even when they begin to cause a lot of physical and emotional trouble.

If you recognize yourself — or someone you love — in this portrait, you've come to the right book! Although the culture offers plenty to keep an eating disorder going, the pages that follow supply you with lots of ingredients to counter those effects from the inside. Or to start you on that path. I describe the eating disorders from the inside out so you can make sense of what you or your loved one is experiencing. I tell you about what you need for recovery. I describe the process and personnel of treatment in detail. I advise you as a family member or other caring person how to help the person you care about and how to take care of yourself at the same time.

Eating disorders are treacherous. They destroy and even take lives, and they make sufferers doubt and hate themselves. But the happy news is that the majority of people who pitch into treatment and stay with it through recovery get better. They go on to think about and engage in other things, become successful and fulfilled, and leave their eating disorders behind. So can you.

About This Book

This book is aimed at helping you recover from your eating disorder (or helping someone you love recover). I build two big assumptions about what's necessary for recovery into the organization of the book:

If you're aiming at getting better, it helps to understand the nature of an eating disorder

and how you get one.

The way you think about a problem determines how you try to solve it. For instance, if you think your eating disorder shows you don't have enough willpower to control your eating, you may search for bigger and better ways to put controls on yourself. If, on the other hand, you understand that your disorder reflects low self-esteem and problems handling emotions, you can go to work on improving your life in these areas.

I spend a lot of time going over the ways of thinking and looking at yourself that make you vulnerable to an eating disorder. I spend at least as much time describing ways of thinking and behaving that can build inner reserves and make an eating disorder much less likely. This building process can be exciting and gratifying at times. But it can be frustrating and slow-going at others. Knowing what you're doing and why can help you to keep plugging.

Studies show that people who stay in eating disorder treatment long enough to build up inner strengths, rather than just manage outer symptoms (like bingeing or starving), are more likely to get better and stay better.

Getting better means getting treatment.

For most people, recovering from an eating disorder isn't a self-help operation. (You can read about the exceptions to this rule in Chapter 12.) You need to hire experts and invest a lot of yourself and your time in your treatment. I

devote a lot of space to taking you through the treatment process, step-by-step, from beginning to end. This includes understanding treatment options and when to choose them, selecting a therapist and other members of your treatment team, and understanding your own role in the treatment process. I want you to have the best possible chance of being successful.

If you're a family member, I go over in detail how to approach the person you love about treatment. I discuss your role in treatment and how to support recovery in day-to-day living.

I've written *Eating Disorders For Dummies* so that you can jump in wherever your interest takes you — you don't have to read this book from start to finish. Each section includes references to other parts of the book that have more information on the subject you're reading about.

Conventions Used in This Book

Many times in this book, particularly in the treatment sections, I use fictional people to illustrate a point I'm making. These people represent composites of people I've met and/or worked with over the years. In no case do they represent real people.

From time to time, I introduce new terms as I explain ideas important to your understanding of the eating disorders. Mostly I do this when you're likely to run into the term elsewhere and it may be helpful for you to know it. Each time I first use a new term, I *italicize* it, and usually follow it with an explanation.

Eating disorders are still primarily a female affair. So I make my life, and hopefully your reading, easier by using all female pronouns: *her*, *hers*, *she*. That doesn't mean I'm not aware that men can develop eating disorders, too. If you're a guy, your disorder is just as serious! (See Chapter 15.)

It would have made for easier language to refer to people with anorexia as *anorexics*, people with bulimia as *bulimics*, and so on. I avoid this streamlined language to make a crucial point: Saying you are a *person with an eating disorder* serves as a reminder that there's more to you, much more, than your eating disorder. Also, there's no reason to assume your disorder is a permanent part of your identity, the way you do when you say you're a woman, or a Latina, or American-born. Saying you're a person with an eating disorder is more like saying you have a major illness. Beating your eating disorder may be a big battle, but your eating disorder is not who you are.

What You're Not to Read

You're not to read anything that isn't crucial to understanding eating disorders and their treatment *if you don't feel like it*. Sometimes I add some extra information that's a little more in-depth but not essential. I mark all such in-depth detours with a Technical Stuff icon.

In the same spirit, along the way I offer extra nuggets of information on the subject you're reading about tucked away in gray boxes called *sidebars*. Read them. Don't read them. The choice is yours. It won't make a difference in your understanding of the subject at hand.

Foolish Assumptions

I assume if you're reading this, you're one of the following people:

- ✓ **You have or suspect you have an eating disorder:** You want to know there's hope, get a better handle on your problem, be pointed in the right direction for treatment, and get a preview of the recovery process.
- ✓ **You have a family member, friend, or roommate who has an eating disorder:** You want to understand her problem better, know how you can help, understand treatment options if you're the parent of a minor, and get some ideas about support for yourself.
- ✓ **You're a professional who works in some way with people with eating disorders:** You need a

quick reference and overview to help you understand the problem and how you can help in your particular role.

If any of these descriptions sound like you, you've come to the right book!

How This Book Is Organized

Eating Disorder For Dummies is organized into 5 parts with 27 chapters. What follows is a description of what you can find in each part.

Part I: Eating Disorders: An All-Consuming World of Their Own

Part I intends to help you really *get* what eating disorders are about. Chapter 1 gives you the big picture and previews what you find in the rest of the book. Chapters 2 to 4 introduce you to the three major eating disorders: *anorexia*, *bulimia*, and *binge eating disorder*. These chapters each come with a questionnaire so you can judge whether you're at risk for one of these disorders. Chapter 5 reviews the risk factors that make a person vulnerable to developing an eating disorder — genes, brain chemistry, family background, personality characteristics, trauma history, and dieting behavior. In Chapter 6 you can find out about the physical toll eating disordered behavior takes on your body. Finally, Chapter 7 describes other psychological disorders that typically accompany an eating disorder, such as anxiety, depression, addiction, and compulsive exercise.

Part II: Getting Well: Exploring Recovery and Treatment Options

Part II is your treatment handbook. I start you off with a map of recovery goals, so you know what you're aiming at. If you like, you can use the charts I provide to map yourself: Where are you now and what would you like to work on next in relation to each goal?

If you're just thinking about treatment or want to review the treatment you're in, Chapter 9 goes over all your treatment options. This includes treatment experts and facilities. It also includes a discussion of why you might make each choice. Chapter 10 helps you pick the approach to individual therapy that's right for you. It takes you right inside an imaginary session for each approach so you can get a feel for what it may be like. Chapters 11 and 12 explore additional options: family, couples, and group therapies; support groups; medication; and online treatments.

In Chapter 13 I help you think about your own role in using your treatment team and getting better. I follow this up with a chapter on managing early stage recovery successfully, including dealing with relapse.

Part III: Eating Disorders in Special Populations

This part focuses on special groups in the population who are at high risk for eating disorders or whose eating disorder risk has been under-recognized. I highlight special treatment considerations for each group. These groups include

- ✓ Men
- ✓ Athletes
- ✓ Dancers, models, and actors
- ✓ Children
- ✓ Middle-aged and elderly people
- ✓ People who are obese