

# Intersection of Trauma and Eating Disorders

## What is Trauma?

- Trauma can be any experience that overwhelms or dysregulates an individual's nervous system.
- Below are some examples of traumatic experiences, but is **not** a comprehensive or exhaustive list.

## Commonly Experienced Traumas

- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or violence.
- Neglect.
- Attachment or relational trauma.
- Bullying.

- Learning about physical, emotional or sexual abuse or violence of a loved one.
- Witnessing a loved one endure a near death experience.
- A loved one experienced a natural disaster or was a refugee.

- Near death experience.
- Natural disaster.
- War or refugee experiences.
- Immigration experiences.
- Experiencing homelessness or poverty.

- Experiencing racism, sexism, homophobia, or transphobia directly or vicariously.
- Enduring identity-related stressors such as stereotypes.
- Experiencing violence or discrimination based on race, culture, gender, or sexuality.

## Eating Disorders & Trauma

### Unprocessed Trauma

- Eating disorders or disordered eating behaviors can be related to unprocessed trauma.
- Individuals who experience trauma are more likely to develop an eating disorder.

### Coping Mechanism

- Eating disorder behaviors may be attempts at nervous system regulation and might be used to numb or cope with emotions associated with trauma
- Eating disorder behaviors might give a sense of control that was lost during the traumatic event.

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## Eating Disorder Symptoms

### Restricting/Purging

- Under-eating based on energy needs.
- Fear of gaining weight.
- Vomiting, misusing laxatives, overexercising to compensate for binge eating.

### Binge Eating

- Eating large amounts of food (larger than one would typically eat) in a certain time period.
- Feeling a lack of control while eating.
- Eating until uncomfortably full.
- Eating large amounts of food without hunger cues.

### Body Image Issues

- Preoccupation with food and body image.
- Experiencing negative body image.
- Spending a lot of time thinking about body shape or weight.

### Avoiding/Restricting

- Having a small number of foods that are safe to eat.
- Lack in variety of foods consumed (not due to access)
- Lack of nutrition and, for some, weight loss.
- Forgetting to eat or skipping multiple meals in a row.

### Needing to Eat "Clean"

- Food rules about not eating processed or already prepared foods, or others
- Spends excessive amount of time preparing foods that are "healthy"
- Self worth may be tied to eating "clean" or "healthy".

### Disordered Eating

- Rigid routines or rules around food and exercise.
- Frequent dieting or restriction.
- Feelings of guilt and shame around food.
- Obsessing over the nutritional contents of food.
- Fear of gaining weight.

### Compulsive Exercising

- Working through injuries or illnesses.
- Exercising to a point where it is interfering with other aspects of life.
- Needing to exercise a certain amount to gain permission to eat food.
- Exercising in secret.

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## What is EMDR Therapy?

### Evidence-Based Trauma Therapy

- EMDR therapy stands for Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing therapy.
- EMDR therapy is an evidence-based treatment used to treat depression, anxiety, trauma-related disorders, and eating disorders.
- EMDR therapy is designed to heal and reprocess traumatic or distressing memories.

## How Can EMDR Help?

### Unwanted Trauma-Based or Eating Disorder Memories

- EMDR therapy can be used to treat unwanted distressing memories associated with eating and body image.
- For individuals who experienced trauma and have an eating disorder, EMDR therapy can target the trauma-based memories to help promote resilience in eating disorder recovery.

## Who Is a Good Fit for EMDR Therapy?

### Alternative to Traditional Talk Therapy

- EMDR therapy requires less talking than other 'traditional' therapies. You don't have to share anything that you don't feel comfortable discussing.
- EMDR may be a good fit for someone who wants a different approach than talk therapy.

## Interested in EMDR Therapy?

### EMDR Therapy in Rockville, MD

- The Eating Disorder Center offers EMDR therapy virtually and in-person in Rockville, MD and virtually in MD for teens and adults.
- EMDR therapy can be used for eating disorder and trauma treatment or a stand alone treatment for treatment.

### Trauma-Informed Eating Disorder Therapy

- We offer eating disorder therapy for teens and adults in person in Rockville, MD and virtually in MD, VA, DC, NY, & FL.
- Outside of EMDR therapy, our clinicians utilize a trauma-informed approach with other treatment methods such as CBT, ACT, DBT, and ERP.

## Contact Us!



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