

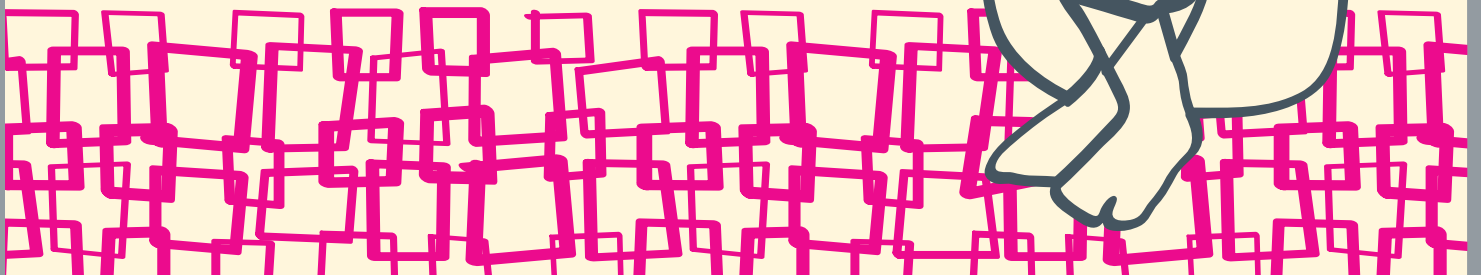
# *RECOGNIZING AND DEALING WITH EATING DISORDERS*

A GUIDE TO ACCOMPANY THE HBO® DOCUMENTARY FILM *THIN*



# 10 SIGNS OF AN EATING DISORDER

1. **Drastic weight loss**
2. **Preoccupation with counting calories**
3. **The need to weigh yourself several times a day**
4. **Excessive exercise**
5. **Binge eating or purging**
6. **Food rituals, like taking tiny bites, skipping food groups or re-arranging food on the plate**
7. **Avoiding meals or only wanting to eat alone**
8. **Taking laxatives or diuretics**
9. **Smoking to curb appetite**
10. **Persistent view of yourself as fat that worsens despite weight loss**





# WHAT IS AN EATING DISORDER?

Eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder include extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues. **They are serious emotional and physical problems** that can have life-threatening consequences for females and males.

## **ANOREXIA NERVOSA**

**is characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.**

Symptoms include:

- Refusal to maintain body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for height, body type, age, and activity level
- Intense fear of weight gain or being “fat”
- Feeling “fat” or overweight despite dramatic weight loss
- Loss of menstrual periods
- Extreme concern with body weight and shape

## **BULIMIA NERVOSA**

**is characterized by a secretive cycle of binge eating followed by purging. Bulimia includes eating large amounts of food—more than most people would eat in one meal—in short periods of time, then getting rid of the food and calories through vomiting, laxative abuse, or over-exercising.**

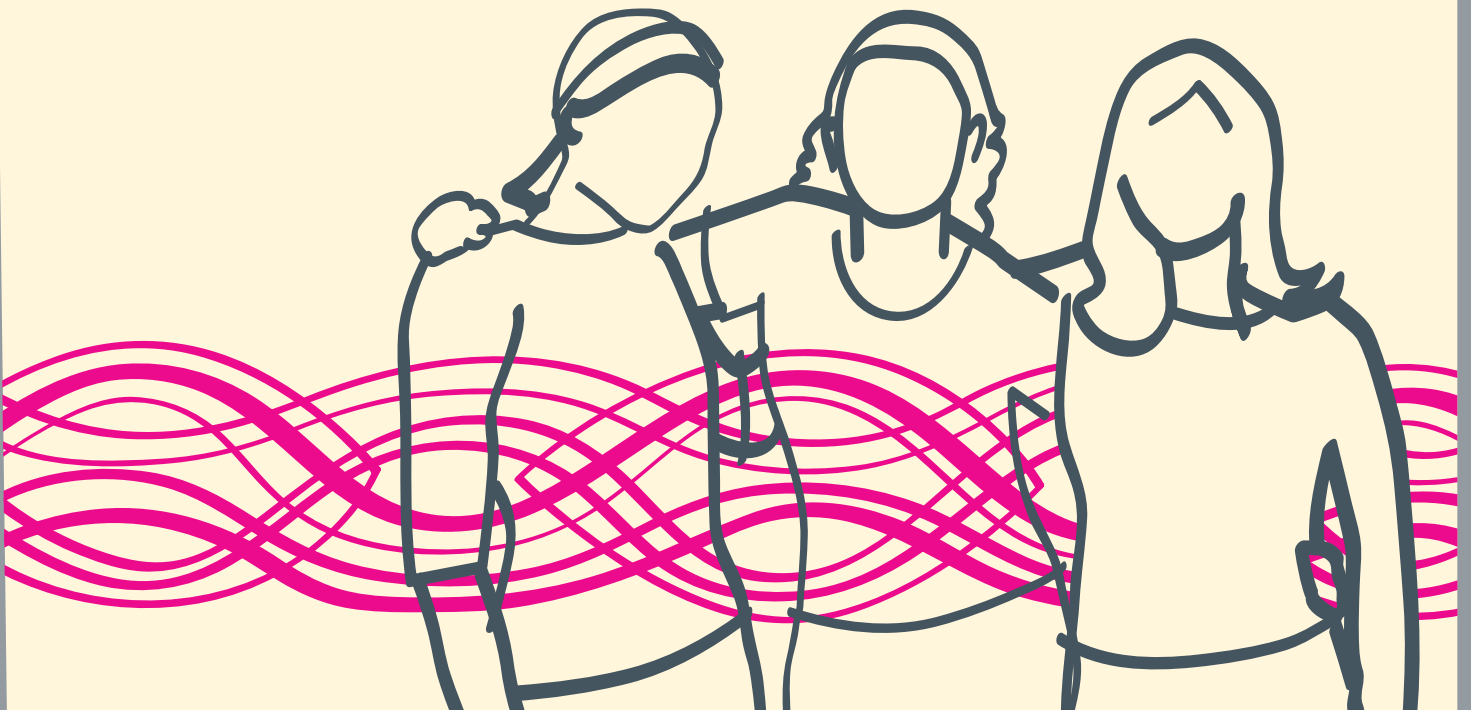
Symptoms include:

- Repeated episodes of bingeing and purging
- Feeling out of control during a binge and eating beyond the point of comfortable fullness
- Purging after a binge (typically by self-induced vomiting, abuse of laxatives, diet pills and/or diuretics, excessive exercise, or fasting)
- Frequent dieting
- Extreme concern with body weight and shape

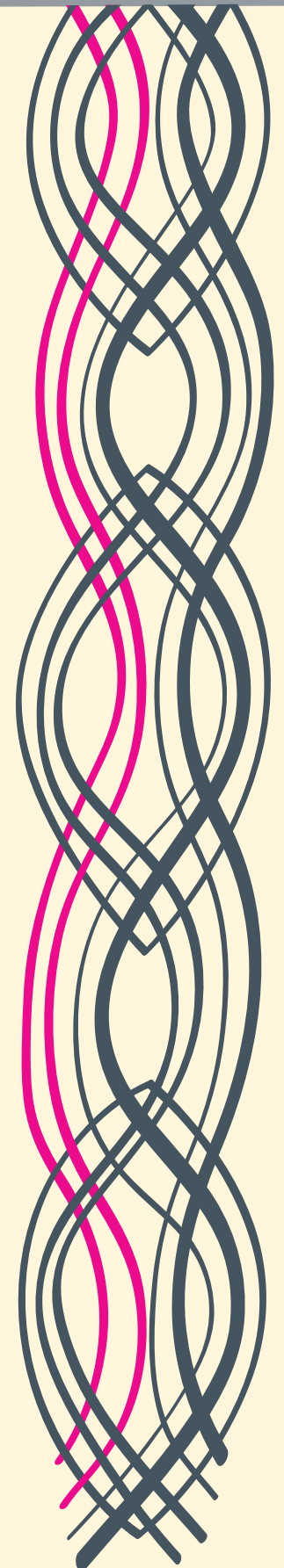
# HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

**Remember that you cannot force someone to seek help, change their habits, or adjust their attitudes.** You will make important progress in honestly sharing your concerns, providing support, and knowing where to go for more information! People struggling with anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge eating disorder do need professional help.

If you are concerned about the eating habits, weight, or body image of someone you care about, let us assure you that you are doing a great thing by looking for more information. This list may not tell you everything you need to know about what to do in your specific situation, but it will give you some helpful ideas on what to do to help a friend or loved one.

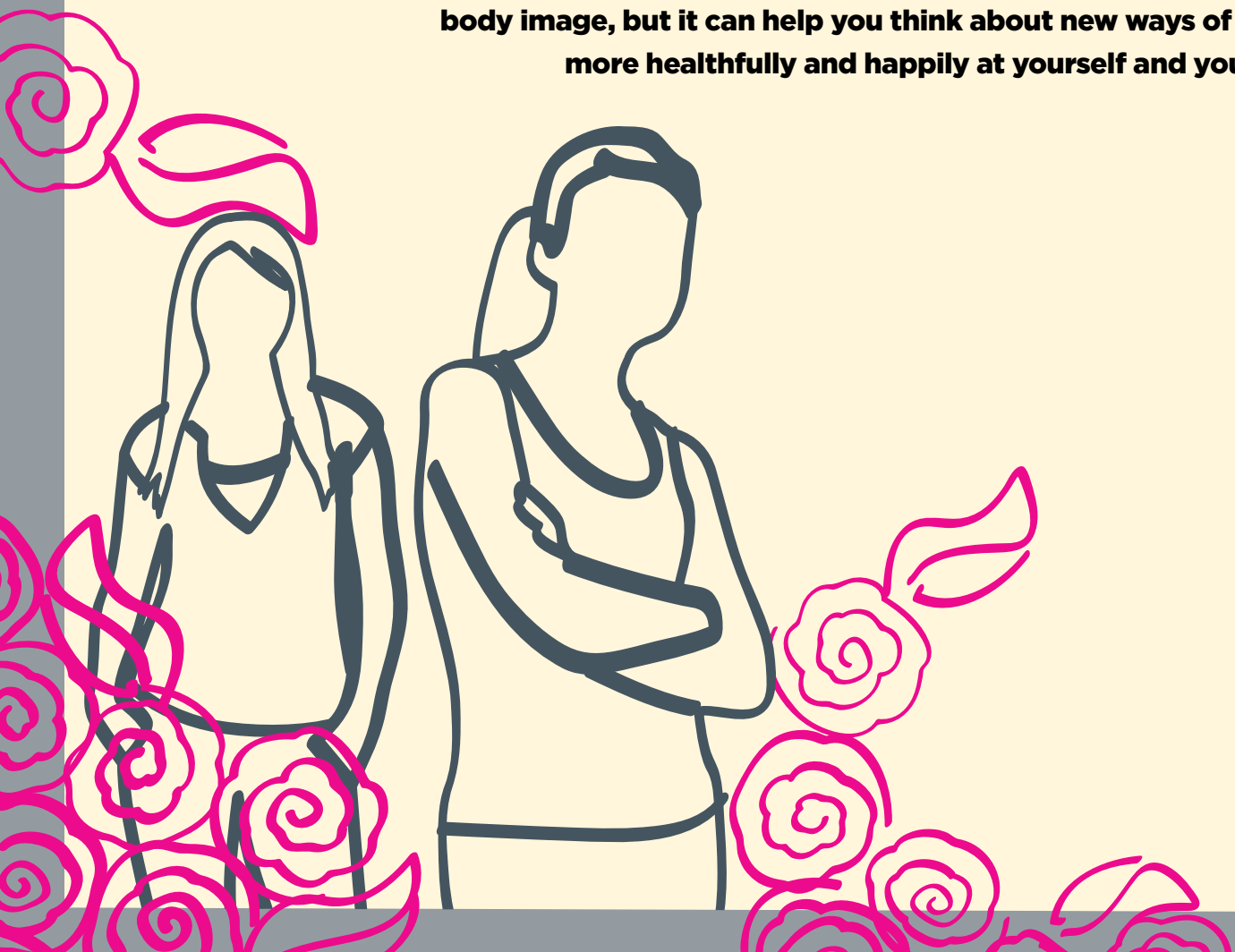



- **LEARN** as much as you can about eating disorders. Read books, articles, and brochures, and utilize helpful online resources (see back page).
- **KNOW THE DIFFERENCES** between facts and myths about weight, nutrition, and exercise. Knowing the facts will help you reason against any inaccurate ideas that your friend may be using as excuses to maintain their disordered eating patterns.
- **BE HONEST.** Talk openly and honestly about your concerns with the person who is struggling with eating or body image problems. Avoiding it or ignoring it won't help.
- **BE CARING, BUT BE FIRM.** Caring about your friend does not mean being manipulated by them. Your friend must be responsible for their actions and the consequences of those actions. Avoid making rules, promises, or expectations that you cannot or will not uphold. For example, "I promise not to tell anyone." Or, "If you do this one more time I'll never talk to you again."
- **COMPLIMENT** your friend's personality, successes, or accomplishments. Remind your friend that "true beauty" is not simply skin deep.
- **BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL** in regard to sensible eating, exercise, and self-acceptance.
- **TELL SOMEONE.** It may seem difficult to know when, if at all, to tell someone else about your concerns—a guidance counselor, doctor, parent or friend. Addressing body image or eating problems in their beginning stages offers your friend or loved one the best chance for working through these issues and becoming healthy again. Don't wait until the situation is so severe that their life is in danger.



# *10 STEPS TO A POSITIVE BODY IMAGE*

**One list cannot transform negative body thoughts into a positive body image, but it can help you think about new ways of looking more healthfully and happily at yourself and your body.**

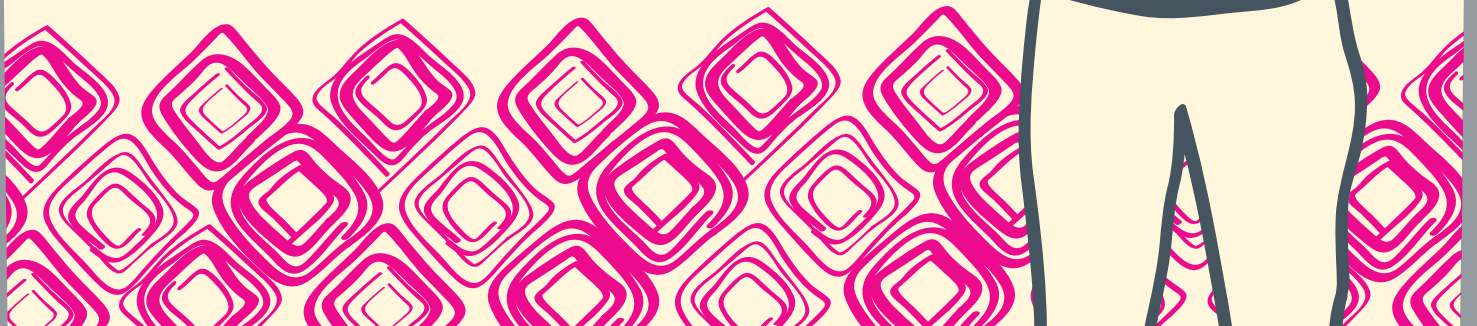


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1. **APPRECIATE** all that your body can do. Celebrate all of the amazing things your body does for you—running, dancing, breathing, laughing, dreaming, etc.
  2. **KEEP A TOP-10 LIST** of things you like about yourself—things that aren't related to how much you weigh or what you look like. Read your list often. Add to it as you become aware of more things to like about you.
  3. **REMINDE YOURSELF** that “true beauty” is not simply skin-deep. When you feel good about yourself and who you are, you carry yourself with a sense of confidence, self-acceptance, and openness that makes you beautiful regardless of whether you physically look like a super model. Beauty is a state of mind, not a state of your body.
  4. **LOOK AT YOURSELF** as a whole person. When you see yourself in a mirror or in your mind, choose not to focus on specific body parts. See yourself as you want others to see you—as a whole person.
  5. **SURROUND YOURSELF** with positive people. It is easier to feel good about yourself and your body when you are around others who are supportive and who recognize the importance of liking yourself just as you naturally are.
  6. **SHUT DOWN THOSE VOICES IN YOUR HEAD** that tell you your body is not “right” or that you are a “bad” person. You can overpower those negative thoughts with positive ones. The next time you start to tear yourself down, build yourself back up with a few quick affirmations that work for you.
  7. **WEAR CLOTHES THAT ARE COMFORTABLE** and that make you feel good about your body. Work with your body, not against it.
  8. **BECOME A CRITICAL VIEWER** of social and media messages. Pay attention to images, slogans, or attitudes that make you feel bad about yourself or your body. Protest these messages: write a letter to the advertiser or talk back to the image or message.
  9. **DO SOMETHING NICE FOR YOURSELF**—something that lets your body know you appreciate it. Take a bubble bath, make time for a nap, find a peaceful place outside to relax.
  10. **USE THE TIME AND ENERGY** that you might have spent worrying about food, calories, and your weight to do something to help others. Sometimes reaching out to other people can help you feel better about yourself and can make a positive change in our world.

# SEEKING TREATMENT

**Eating disorders are serious health conditions that can be both physically and emotionally destructive.**

People with eating disorders need to seek professional help. If not identified or treated in their early stages, eating disorders can become chronic, debilitating, and even life-threatening conditions.





## **WHAT DOES TREATMENT INVOLVE?**

The most effective and long-lasting treatment for an eating disorder is some form of psychotherapy or psychological counseling, coupled with careful attention to medical and nutritional needs. Ideally, this treatment should be tailored to the individual and will vary according to both the severity of the disorder and the patient's particular problems, needs, and strengths.

- Psychological counseling must address both the eating disordered symptoms and the underlying psychological, interpersonal, and cultural forces that contributed to the eating disorder. Typically, care is provided by a licensed health professional, including but not limited to a psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, nutritionist, and/or medical doctor. Care should be coordinated and provided by a health professional with expertise and experience in dealing with eating disorders.
- Many people with eating disorders respond to outpatient therapy, including individual, group, or family therapy and medical management by their primary care provider. Support groups, nutritional counseling, and psychiatric medications under careful medical supervision have also proven helpful for some individuals.
- Hospital Based Care (including inpatient, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient, and/or residential care in an eating disorders specialty unit or facility) is necessary when an eating disorder has led to physical problems that may be life-threatening, or when it is associated with severe psychological or behavioral problems.
- The exact treatment needs of each individual will vary. It is important for individuals struggling with an eating disorder to find a health professional they trust to help coordinate and oversee their care.

# 10 THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO PREVENT EATING DISORDERS

By Michael Levine, Ph.D., and Linda Smolak, Ph.D.

- 1. CONSIDER** your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors toward your own body and the way that these beliefs have been shaped by the forces of weightism and sexism. Then educate your children about: (a) the genetic basis for the natural diversity of human body shapes and sizes, and (b) the nature and ugliness of prejudice.  
**Make an effort to maintain positive, healthy attitudes and behaviors. Children learn from the things you say and do!**
- 2. EXAMINE** closely your dreams and goals for your children and other loved ones. Are you overemphasizing beauty and body shape, particularly for girls?
  - Avoid conveying an attitude which says, in effect, “I will like you more if you lose weight, don’t eat so much, look more like the slender models in ads, fit into smaller clothes, etc.”
  - Decide what you can do and what you can stop doing to reduce the teasing, criticism, blaming, staring, etc., that reinforce the idea that larger or fatter is “bad” and smaller or thinner is “good.”
- 3. LEARN ABOUT AND DISCUSS** with your sons and daughters: (a) the dangers of trying to alter one’s body shape through dieting, (b) the value of moderate exercise for health, and (c) the importance of eating a variety of foods in well-balanced meals consumed at least three times a day.
  - Avoid categorizing foods into “good/safe/no-fat or low-fat” vs. “bad/dangerous/fattening.”
  - Be a good role model in regard to sensible eating, exercise, and self-acceptance.
- 4. MAKE A COMMITMENT NOT TO AVOID ACTIVITIES** (such as swimming, sunbathing, dancing, etc.) simply because they call attention to your weight and shape. Refuse to wear clothes that are uncomfortable or that you don’t like but wear simply because they divert attention from your weight or shape.
- 5. MAKE A COMMITMENT TO EXERCISE** for the joy of feeling your body move and grow stronger, not to purge fat from your body or to compensate for calories eaten.
- 6. PRACTICE** taking people seriously for what they say, feel, and do, not for how slender or “well put together” they appear.
- 7. HELP** children appreciate and resist the ways in which television, magazines, and other media distort the true diversity of human body types and imply that a slender body means power, excitement, popularity, or perfection.
- 8. EDUCATE** boys and girls about various forms of prejudice, including weightism, and help them understand their responsibilities for preventing them.
- 9. ENCOURAGE** your children to be active and to enjoy what their bodies can do and feel like. Do not limit their caloric intake unless a physician requests that you do this because of a medical problem.
- 10. DO WHATEVER YOU CAN** to promote the self-esteem and self-respect of all of your children in intellectual, athletic, and social endeavors. Give boys and girls the same opportunities and encouragement. Be careful not to suggest that females are less important than males, e.g., by exempting males from housework or childcare. A well-rounded sense of self and solid self-esteem are perhaps the best antidotes to dieting and disordered eating.

Source: National Eating Disorders Association, 2005



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE HBO DOCUMENTARY FILM *THIN*

**The questions below are intended to be used in conjunction with the HBO documentary film *Thin*. This guide can be used by teachers, community groups, families, or individuals who are interested in exploring the various issues raised by the film.**

1. What factors contribute to positive body image and healthy self-esteem?
2. Do you think there is such thing as a perfect body?
3. Alisa drew an outline of what she perceives to be her body image. How do you see your own body? Does your perception change depending on your mood? Do others see you the way you see yourself?
4. Where does the standard for what is attractive come from in our society?
5. Why do you think people compare themselves to other people, friends or classmates? How does it make you feel to compare yourself to others?
6. How are contemporary female bodies typically represented in advertisements, television, movies, and print media? How do these representations influence the way girls feel about their bodies and the way they dress?
7. Who in society benefits from people being unhappy with their bodies?
8. Polly and Brittany discuss their parents' attitudes toward dieting. Think about your own parents/guardians. Do they diet, count calories, exercise? How has their attitude about weight affected you?
9. Shelly has a twin sister. How do siblings and/or peers influence the way young boys and girls act, look, and think about themselves and others?
10. The individuals who are featured in the film are all women. Men also struggle with eating disorders, but why do you think anorexia and bulimia overwhelmingly affect young females more than young males?



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Premieres Tuesday, Nov. 14 at 9pm/8C on HBO  
Or see it anytime on HBO On Demand

Companion book available from



Companion DVD available at HBO.COM

A downloadable PDF of this guide is available at  
THINDOCUMENTARY.COM or HBO.COM/DOCS

**HBO** DOCUMENTARY FILMS™

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EDITED BY KATE AMEND, A.C.E.  
FOR HBO: SUPERVISING PRODUCER LISA HELLER EXECUTIVE PRODUCER SHEILA NEVINS

**If you or someone you know is suffering from an eating disorder, it is important to seek help immediately.**

## RESOURCES

### National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)

[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)  
Toll free live help line: 800-931-2237  
Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (PST)

### Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action (EDC)

[www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org](http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org)  
202-543-9570

### Academy for Eating Disorders (AED)

[www.aedweb.org](http://www.aedweb.org)  
847-498-4274

### National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC)

[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)  
900-994-9662

### Eating Disorder Referral and Information Center (EDRIC)

[www.edreferral.com](http://www.edreferral.com)

### Something Fishy

[www.something-fishy.org](http://www.something-fishy.org)

### Gürze Books

[www.bulimia.com](http://www.bulimia.com)

### American Dietetic Association

Eating Disorder Fact Sheet  
[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

### Empowered Parents

[www.empoweredparents.com](http://www.empoweredparents.com)

### Thin Documentary Website

[www.thindocumentary.com](http://www.thindocumentary.com)

**Inclusion on this list is in no way an endorsement of these sites. HBO is not responsible for the informational content of these sites.**

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