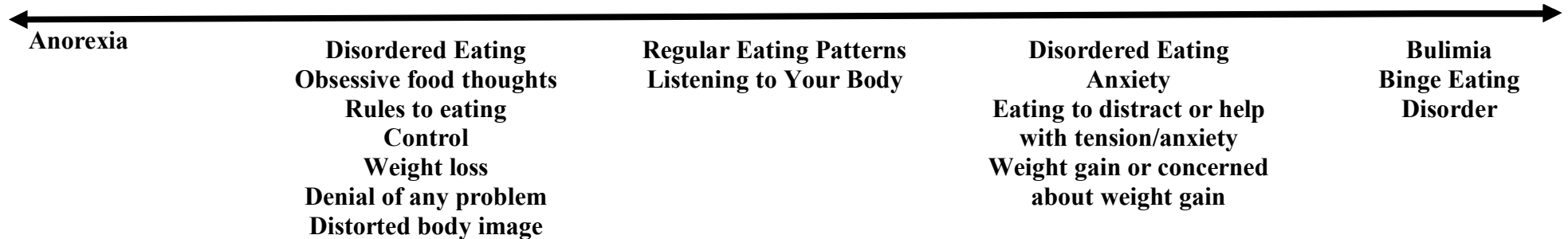




Eating Behaviors Continuum



It's important to keep in mind that not everyone fits into a specific category. Someone may have signs or symptoms that fit into multiple categories. For example, someone that may fit into the definition of anorexia may also binge and purge. Anyone can move across the continuum at any point in time and it may be something that is constantly changing.

Anorexia and bulimia are specific, clinically diagnosable eating disorders through the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). Roughly, 2-4% of the population will fit into the category of anorexia or bulimia. However, a larger proportion of the population may fit into the category of Eating Disorders - Not Otherwise Specified (ED-NOS).

Regular Eating Patterns/Listening to Your Body is characterized by eating when you are hungry and stopping when you are full. With regular eating, you are not concerned about what others think about and how much you eat. You don't feel guilty about what you eat and do not see food as either "good" or "bad." You spend time planning meals, but it does not take over your thoughts. You have realistic feelings and perceptions about your body weight, shape and size. You allow yourself to splurge on foods that are not always healthy for you, but seem enjoyable in the moment. You don't try to control your food by counting calories, fat grams or any "accounting" system.

Disordered Eating is characterized by behaviors, attitudes or emotions about food, weight, body shape, and/or exercise that has a negative impact on daily life, jeopardizing health, happiness and safety. Disordered eating could include a combination of signs/symptoms of anorexia, bulimia, and/or binge eating disorder. Disordered eating may or may not be diagnosed by a physician.

Eating Disorder – NOS is more prevalent than anorexia and bulimia. A person with ED-NOS may exhibit signs, symptoms and behaviors of an eating disorder, but not meet the set criteria for that disorder. Signs or symptoms may include obsessive thoughts about food, weight and body shape, distorted body image, eating to distract or help ease tension or anxiety, excessive exercise, binging, purging, and withdrawal from friends and family especially in events surrounding food. People with Binge Eating Disorder are diagnosed with ED-NOS.



Eating Behaviors Continuum (con't)

Anorexia is characterized by self-starvation, excessive weight loss, feeling “fat” or overweight despite dramatic weight loss, extreme concern with body weight and shape and denial about the problem. People with anorexia have an extreme fear of gaining weight and losing control.

Bulimia is characterized by feeling a strong drive or urge to eat a large amount of food in a relatively short period of time followed by feelings of guilt for having eaten so much food and frustration over “losing control.” These feelings are often alleviated through a compensatory mechanism such as, purging; vomiting, laxative or diuretic use, fasting or restrictive eating, and/or exercise. These individuals are often normal to slightly overweight and may have struggled with weight for much of their lives.

Binge Eating Disorder or Compulsive Overeating is characterized by periods of uncontrollable, impulsive or continuous eating beyond the point of feeling full; followed by feelings of shame or self-hatred, with no compensatory mechanism as you would find in Bulimia. These individuals may struggle with anxiety, depression and loneliness. Binge Eating Disorder may result in obesity.