

# Your EAP|Here4TN!

*for you and your family*

**PARTNERS**  
**FOR HEALTH**  
EMPLOYEE  
ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM

## Recognize and Get Help for Eating Disorders

Many people think about their weight and size throughout the day. Being aware of what to eat is important but there is a point when it can become dangerous. It's always good to want to be fit and keep control of one's diet. But when someone seems fixated on losing weight and will do whatever it takes to do so, an eating disorder may be involved.

Each year, millions of people in the U.S. develop eating disorders. The three most common are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating. An eating disorder is an illness whereby people try to control their weight by starving, overeating, or a combination of binge eating and purging. While young women are most commonly at risk, these disorders can be found among all types of people.

Eating disorders don't happen because of failures of willpower or character. Instead, they are real, treatable medical illnesses in which certain damaging patterns of eating have taken on a life of their own.

In this issue, we take a close look at:

- Different types of eating disorders. We examine how they can be recognized and successfully treated.
- How a distorted body image can contribute to poor self-esteem and eating disorders.
- How to help teens develop healthier self-images.

Your ParTNers EAP is here to help you or a family member with difficult challenges such as eating disorders. Through coaching, counseling and resources, the EAP can help you solve problems and move forward positively. You can reach our caring professional staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Call us at 1.855.Here4TN (1.855.437.3486). Confidential counseling—provided face-to-face or by telephone to fit your schedule—is available at no cost to you and your family members.

Also, the [www.HERE4TN.com](http://www.HERE4TN.com) website offers tools and resources to help you learn about improving your emotional wellness. On the site you can also search for a counseling professional in your area. Log on!

In this issue, we focus on information and education about eating disorders and body image. You may be battling an eating disorder or know someone who is. If you are not, we hope the information and tips make you more aware of the issue and provide general information about body image.

Join ParTNers EAP and Magellan for an online live webinar **February 12** from 1 to 2 pm Central time. The topic is eating disorders and will focus on:

- General information
- Body image and self-esteem
- And also teenagers and body image

Body image can be an issue for many people and we are here to help. Remember if you need assistance with body image, self-esteem or eating disorders, ParTNers EAP is here for you 24/7 whether you want to talk with someone in person or over the phone. To set up an appointment call **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486). Click [here](#) or visit [www.Here4TN.com](http://www.Here4TN.com) to register.



# Get Help for Eating Disorders

An eating disorder is a serious threat to one's health and well-being. So it's important to recognize dangerous behaviors and seek help for the individual. Some of the warning signs include:



- An intense fear of becoming heavier, even though underweight.
- An obvious weight decrease in a short period of time.
- Abnormal eating habits, including extreme dieting, refusal to eat in front of others, or secretive bingeing.
- Compulsive exercising.
- Avoidance of typical activities because of weight concerns
- Changes in wardrobe including wearing larger clothes to hide any weight loss.

There are three primary types of eating disorders:

- **Anorexia nervosa**, a type of self-starvation, is probably the best known eating disorder. It involves great anxiety about gaining weight.
- The second major eating disorder is **bulimia nervosa**. Symptoms include "bingeing and purging." A bulimic person typically eats a great deal, then purges through self-caused vomiting or misuse of laxatives or other drugs.
- Patterns of eating in **binge eating disorder** are similar to bulimia, but there is no purging of the excess calories.

Eating disorders often coexist with other behavioral health problems such as depression and anxiety. People with eating disorders may also suffer serious physical health complications. These can include heart conditions and kidney failure, which may even lead to death.

Often people with eating disorders do not admit their illness. This can cause them to avoid getting treatment. **But treatment is crucial!** The sooner these disorders are diagnosed and treated, the better the outcomes.

Treatment for eating disorders typically includes medical monitoring (including feeding plans) and counseling. It also includes nutritional education and, when appropriate, medication management.

Trusted family members and friends can help make sure people with eating disorders get the care they need. Advice and counsel with a professional is available through ParTNers EAP. Call us at **1.855.Here4TN** (1.855.437.3486) for assistance 24/7.

## *Now That's An Idea!*

### **Help Teens Have a Healthy Body Image**

*Only make positive comments about a teen's appearance. Don't be critical about your teen's weight or shape. Instead, offer compliments about all of his or her positive qualities.*

*Teach them about how the media misleads. Explain how most media images of celebrated people are airbrushed or photo-edited. Stylists and cosmetic surgeries further fuel misleading body images. Teach teens to have healthy skepticism, and to not compare themselves to unreal images.*

*Focus on qualities other than appearance. Encourage your teen in his or her efforts to develop talents and skills that are not tied to how they look.*

*Set a good example. Don't openly criticize your own appearance. Shape your family dialogue in positive directions. Emphasize accomplishments, not flaws.*

*Consult ParTNers EAP to can get help for your teen from a counselor—easily accessible 24/7. This can help your teen learn to appreciate their strengths, develop healthier thinking, and self-esteem.*

