

Bulimia and Self-esteem

Low self-esteem, negative body image, and feelings of criticism of one's weight are linked to bulimia. The review will explore the research on each topic and their impact on the individuals who suffer from the disorder.

Bulimia: Glorification of being thin.

There is excessive anxiety about appearance, self-consciousness, and obsessive inner dialogues about weight and shape (Cash 1990; Steiner-Adair 1993). Eating disorders are more likely in people with personality problems such as low self-esteem, personal effectiveness, dependence on external approval, and difficulties achieving social competence and independence (Cheung 1993).

Bulimia Nervosa and Body Image

Body image is described by Birtchenell Lacey and Harte (1995) as including three aspects: (1) physiological, the brain's ability to detect weight, shape, size, and form; (2) conceptual, the mental picture of one's own body; and (3) emotional, the feelings one's body weight, shape, and size.

Bulimia: The Emotional Component

Dissatisfaction with body image often evokes strong feelings such as self-esteem (Brouwers, 1988). Negative attitudes toward the body often begin in the family origin. Debs, Wooley, Harkness-Kling, and Wooley (1983) found that the second biggest predictor of bulimia in female college students (after self-body evaluation) was the daughter's belief that her mother was critical of the daughter's body.

Eating Disorders and Low Self-esteem

Low self-esteem is positively correlated to disordered eating among college students, and decreased self-esteem contributes to poor body image and bulimic symptoms (Vohs, Bardone, Joiner, Abramson & Heatherton, 1999).