

Food, Feelings, & Family:

CRACKING THE CODE ON DISORDERED EATING

A 3 PART PARENTING WORKSHOP SERIES

EMOTIONAL EATING 101 WITH TEMIMAH ZUCKER, LCSW

WWW.TEMIMAH.COM

Defining the Terms:

- **Healthy eating** - intuitive, all food groups, connection to hunger/fullness, exploration of emotional eating
- **Disordered eating** - manipulation of intake or exercise as related to worth
- **Eating disorder** - brief overview of 4 main eating disorders and intersection of rigidity, obsession, impact on functioning

Continuum:

- Eating disorders **do not** exist in a vacuum
- Struggling with disordered eating can lead to eating disorders and even if not, the person is likely missing out on life

Healthy Mindset:

- Impact of glamorization of thinness - validation of how complex body image is in our society today - and visualization of what a healthier relationship with food/body can look like
- Social factors that lead us to a desire for thinness (deprivation, asceticism, submission, smallness and fear of maturation)

Behavioral and Emotional:

- Bio-psycho-social nature of an eating disorder - treating the symptoms does not treat the person
- Behavioral struggles and the way focusing solely on symptoms misses the pain/may even overlook or invalidate the person
- Emotional aspects of an ED: trauma, co-occurring, stress, life changes, self-esteem
- Recovery incorporates both

Food, Feelings, & Family:

CRACKING THE CODE ON DISORDERED EATING

A 3 PART PARENTING WORKSHOP SERIES

ENDING THE DIET CYCLE WITH ALEXANDRA ZOHN, MA, HHC, EPC
@ALEZOHN

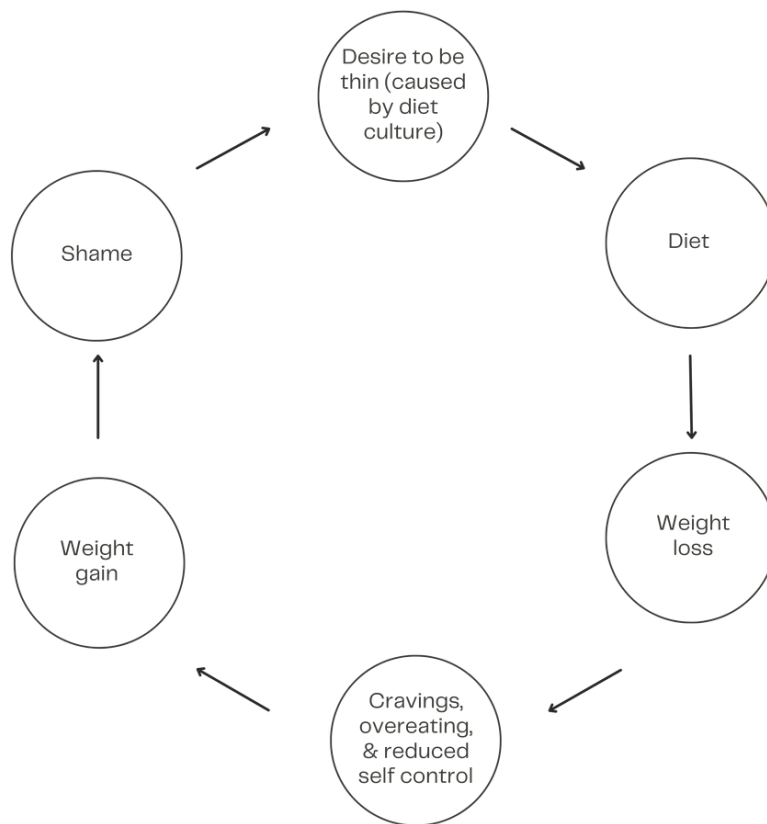
Diet Culture is a belief system that permeates consistently into our everyday life. It worships thinness and equates it to health and moral virtue. It promotes weight loss as a means of attaining higher status, or being desirable; and demonizes certain ways of eating while elevating others. It oppresses and discriminates people who don't match up with its supposed picture of "health," also called "Fatphobia." (Fear of becoming fat and/or fear of fat people). This creates constant stress that harms us way more than our actual weight.

THIN = healthy = good = virtuous = status = desirable
FAT= sick = bad = broken = inferior = worthless = scary

You can find the influence of Diet Culture everywhere. We're all constantly bombarded with it. It's sneaky and rebrands itself constantly, but don't be fooled, if it's about shrinking your body and following food rules, it's a diet.

In some families or social circles, being on a diet is part of the default dynamic. It can even be a generational legacy and a cultural norm.

Diet Culture generates more than 90 billion dollars annually, all based on exploiting our insecurities and creating shame.



The desire to be thin triggers a person to diet. At the beginning, there can be some weight loss (especially during the first few diets) and the person might feel as if she's succeeding, even empowered, but the deprivation of the diet eventually generates cravings and urges of food. The dieter gives in to the craving, overeats (or even binges), and eventually regains the lost weight, or even gains more. The shame causes once again, the desire to lose weight, which prompts the person to begin a new diet, and the cycle continues.

Studies have shown that the sustainability of weight loss is incredibly low: 95% of people who lose weight on a diet gain it all back within 5 years, and between 1/3 to 2/3 of them gain even more weight than their initial one. Making them feel guilty and trapped in a system that doesn't work, but makes them feel as if they are the ones who are broken, because they don't have enough willpower, discipline, commitment, or didn't follow the diet correctly. However, the human body is biologically and psychologically designed to resist starvation, which is what diets are.

Damage from Dieting

- **Biological:** Chronic dieting teaches the body to retain more fat when you eat. Dieting also decreases metabolism: it lowers the body's need for energy, so there will be a tendency to gain weight more easily. Dieting increases our set weight* range. It increases cravings and binges. It causes satiety cues to atrophy, so people no longer know when they are full. Dieting on and off (weight cycling/yo-yo dieting) increases the risk of premature death and heart disease. Weight cycling makes people regain weight in the abdomen, which as opposed to fat accumulation in other areas of the body, increases the risk of cardiovascular disease. Headaches, menstrual irregularities, osteoporosis, fatigue, dry skin, and hair loss are also common effects from dieting.
- **Psycho-Emotional:** Dieting is linked to eating disorders. It may cause psychological stress or make the dieter more susceptible to its effects. It is correlated with feelings of failure, low self-esteem and social anxiety, independent of weight itself. It erodes confidence and self-trust, increases body dissatisfaction and risk of depression. Dieters can often feel loss of control and experience overeating when breaking "the rules" of the diet. The sole perception of eating a "forbidden" food is enough to trigger overeating.

How do we break the Diet Cycle?

Through awareness, self-compassion and kindness we can make the conscious decision to stop the dieting cycle. It starts with each one of us and it permeates to our family and social circles. We can begin by observing the false sense of hope, control and empowerment that diets seduce us with, and see them for what they are: a threat to our physical, social, mental, and emotional health. Even a cause for long term weight gain. If you've been on a diet, what has it cost you?

- **AWARENESS:** Begin noticing the messages of Diet Culture. Get rid of your scale! and ask yourself about how you make decisions regarding eating, exercising and trusting the messages of your body. Do they come from a place of love, respect and kindness towards yourself and your body, or of shame, hatred and judgment?
- **ATTUNEMENT:** Work on relearning how to listen, understand, and trust the messages of your body, and to remove the obstacles that prevent you from doing so. Be patient! This takes time. Learn about Intuitive Eating. Experiment with Mindful Eating meditation and bring it home!

- **BRINGING CHANGE INTO THE COMMUNITY:**

Examples

- Stop applauding weight loss
- Stop speaking about people's bodies. The body is the least interesting part of each person. What really makes people attractive and a good potential partner is their personality, their disposition, their energy, not the size of their jeans. Promote body diversity and inclusivity. Our differences are what make us interesting. We're all unique.
- Set boundaries w family, friends, medical professionals & social media. Politely inform them you are not willing to participate in Diet Culture, and/or unfollow accounts that promote dieting.
- Think of something you don't dare doing because of Diet Culture, and go for it!

*Set weight: the genetically-determined range of weight in which each body tends to be when it's neither under nor over eating, and exercising moderately.

Food, Feelings, & Family:

CRACKING THE CODE ON DISORDERED EATING

A 3 PART PARENTING WORKSHOP SERIES

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE WITH NORMA SAFF MS, RD, CDN, CLT

Protect your child from outside influences that can damage his/her self esteem

- **Your own eating values** → Recognize what messages we are sending to our child about eating, certain body sizes/weight, and physical activity
- **Family members** → Take immediate positive action if possible
- **Weight stigma and doctor** → Understand BMI and growth, speak with the doctor
- **Puberty** → Understand what is normal in terms of body and appetite changes
- **Diet culture** → Develop your child's eating competence

Support your child's eating well being

- **Emotional** → Identify whether your child's eating is positive/occasional, or negative/chronic. Research shows that the more you restrict, the more your child will go overboard in eating that food when they are dealing with negative emotions.
- **Social** → Eating is a social event! We eat better when we eat together.
- **Physical** → Focus on providing adequate nutrition to support growth.

Trust in your child's innate instincts around food and eating

- Your child is born with the innate ability to regulate how much they need to eat. Your job is to preserve that ability! You do this by offering your child full permission to eat as much or as little as they like and to grow into the body that is right for them.
- Eating skills that are learned include how to create balanced meals and snacks, the importance of sitting down while we eat, and how to plan, shop, and prepare meals.
- Implement **Division of Responsibility**
 - When you trust your child around food, they learn to trust themselves around food.
 - Your job IS to ensure that your child has access to a variety of food on a consistent basis and food is offered in a positive and non judgmental way.
 - Your job IS NOT to control how much or how little your child eats
 - If your child is sneaking food, consider if you have been trying to control the amount or type of food your child has access to. Sneaking is usually a sign that your child is ashamed of eating. Give your child an opportunity to eat those foods out in the open without shame, guilt, or limit.
 - The more you try to control what and how much your child eats, the more likely your child is to be preoccupied with those foods and binge on them, along with feeling negatively when they eat them.
 - The more you try to get your child to “healthy”, the less likely they will be willing to try that food and actually enjoy it.

Accept your child as they are

- Prioritize your child's well being above everything else
- Accept unconditionally and without passing judgment
- Be accepting of your child's food preferences and eating styles.
- Work on being more accepting towards your own eating and weight.
- Acceptance is what allows for growth and progress with eating.

How to talk about food

- Avoid labeling food as good/bad, healthy/unhealthy
- Stick to facts and function of foods. Keep it factual and not emotional
- If you are uncertain what to say, it's better to say nothing!
- Use descriptive language to talk about food (think texture, taste, smell)
- Pay attention to your tone!

How to talk about body

- Lead with gratitude (Thanks for sharing that with me)
- Be curious (What makes you say that? What makes you feel that way?)
- Be honest and factual.
- Be empathetic
- Avoid telling your child that the way they are feeling is untrue.
- Focus on what your child's body can do, rather than on weight.