

Overeating

Compulsive overeating is addiction manifested in an obsessive, compulsive relationship with food. The sufferer uses food as a means of trying to suppress or control uncomfortable feelings and crucially cannot experience satisfaction. He or she may often (but not always) overeat starchy and/or sugary foods that create a 'sugar high' to try to escape difficult emotions. This binge eating is usually followed by intense feelings of guilt and remorse, but unlike victims of bulimia, compulsive overeaters do not always attempt to purge their food by vomiting or using laxatives. More often they will try to 'give back' through codependence or compulsive caretaking.

Medical symptoms of compulsive overeating can include (but are not restricted to) significant weight gain and a plethora of associated illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, malnutrition, high cholesterol, hypertension, sleep apnoea, breathing difficulties, heart disease, depression, joint problems, kidney problems and risk of heart attack.

Sufferers of compulsive overeating, which can also be described as binge eating or food addiction, are likely to embark on crash diets or periods of starvation and compulsive exercise in a desperate attempt to 'balance out' their overeating or to lose the weight gained through overeating. People with this disease often suppose that their problems are caused primarily by their size, and subscribe to the belief that they would be happy if they were thinner. However, due to the compulsion of the disease and the restrictive nature of these fad diets, sufferers are rarely able to sustain these diets and often resume their binge eating behaviour, resulting in a vicious cycle of overeating and under-exercising alternating with under-eating and over-exercising. The longer this continues, the more serious the damage caused to the body and the more difficult the cycle is to break.

Compulsive overeaters are likely to feel increasingly negative about themselves as their obsessive behaviour progresses and the side effects become more and more difficult to disguise. Like all sufferers of eating disorders, binge-eaters can be extremely secretive about their food addiction. They will often refrain entirely from eating in public so that no-one is aware of their illness and wait until they are alone so that they can binge in private in an attempt to curb some of the shame and humiliation caused by their illness. This makes it very difficult for friends and family to notice or understand their disease and as the façade of a normal life is continued, the sufferer feels less and less able to seek help. Other victims of compulsive overeating, however, binge-eat in public, in a humiliating ritual of self-deprecation. They will often act the fool to entertain the people around them, believing that if they pretend that their behaviour is amusing and acceptable to others, it will assuage some of the guilt and shame they feel underneath their seemingly robust, happy-go-lucky exterior.

Despite ubiquitous beliefs and advice from doctors, the media and the Government that people suffering from weight problems need only to stick to a diet and do more exercise, for those whose weight issues are caused by compulsive overeating, an additional and more specialised form of help is required to cure the emotional and behavioural problems as well as the trauma that underlie the symptoms of compulsive overeating.

If you think you suffering with overeating then give us a call, we can help

Call 020 7323 4970

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