



Eating Disorder Awareness

Healing Beyond the Plate



Even though the dedicated week is wrapping up, the need for awareness, empathy, and effective support for those affected by eating disorders continues every day of the year.

As the week draws to a close (February 23-March 1, 2026), let's carry forward its core message of increasing understanding, reducing stigma, and emphasizing what truly supports lasting recovery.

Eating disorders are serious mental health conditions, not lifestyle choices, not phases, and not failures of willpower. They are often adaptive coping strategies that developed in response to overwhelming emotions, stress, trauma, perfectionism, or feeling unsafe in one's body.

Recovery is not just "about the food", it is about healing the nervous system, rebuilding trust with the body, mind, and emotions, and learning new ways to cope.

Eating Disorders Are Adaptive, Until They Aren't

For many individuals, disordered eating began as a solution:

- Restriction created numbness or control
- Bingeing provided relief or comfort
- Purging reduced anxiety
- Compulsive exercise discharged stress
- Food rules created predictability

These behaviors often serve protective functions. In trauma informed care, we don't shame the behavior, we explore what it has been protecting.

Why Therapy is Essential

Therapy helps address the roots beneath the behaviors, including:

- Anxiety, depression, and OCD
- Trauma and PTSD
- Perfectionism and high achievement pressure
- Identity, self worth, and shame struggles
- Emotional regulation challenges

Therapy fosters a secure emotional environment that enables true, sustainable shifts away from eating disorder patterns.

Why a Specialized Dietitian is Equally Essential

Nutrition rehabilitation is not just about "what to eat." It is about restoring physiological stability so psychological work can take hold.

A trauma-informed eating disorder dietitian focuses on:

1. Rebuilding Body Trust

A trauma-informed dietitian helps clients:

- Relearn hunger and fullness cues
- Challenge rigid food rules
- Expand food flexibility safely
- Reduce fear foods gradually
- Practice body neutrality

These practices help restore internal signals that eating disorders often distort or silence, fostering emotional safety, fewer obsessive thoughts, and sustainable recovery.



2. Nervous System Stabilization

Regular, adequate nourishment reduces:

- Blood sugar crashes
- Mood swings
- Irritability
- Anxiety spikes
- Obsessive food thoughts

When the brain is under-fueled, the eating disorder voice often grows louder and more powerful. When the brain chemicals become depleted or disrupted, challenging distorted thoughts, resisting urges, and coping with emotions is much more difficult.



3. Metabolic & Hormonal Healing

Eating disorders impact:

- Hormones
- Bone density
- Electrolytes
- Heart rate
- Digestion

Weight alone does not determine severity. A person can appear "healthy" and still be medically compromised.



The Power of a Team Approach

The strongest recovery outcomes occur when care is collaborative:

- Therapist
- Eating disorder-specialized dietitian
- Medical provider

Each provider addresses a different layer of healing:

- Emotional regulation
- Nutritional rehabilitation
- Medical safety

Recovery is not linear. It is layered.

Early Intervention Matters

You do not need to be underweight. You do not need to be "sick enough." You do not need to wait until things get worse.

Warning signs can include:

- Persistent preoccupation with food, weight, or shape
- Rigid food rules
- Anxiety around meals
- Binge/restrict cycles
- Compulsive exercise
- Body checking or avoidance
- Guilt and shame after eating

If it is affecting your quality of life, it deserves support.



Recovery is Possible

Full recovery is possible.

That includes:

- Stable eating patterns
- Reduced food noise
- Emotional resilience
- A life not ruled by numbers, mirrors, or fear

Healing takes time.

It takes support.

It takes safety.

But it is absolutely achievable. If you or someone you love needs help:

- Seek a licensed therapist specializing in eating disorders
- Work with a registered dietitian trained in eating disorder care
- In crisis, call or text 988

Let's replace stigma with understanding, silence with conversation, and shame with compassion.

