

TALKING THERAPY CAN DEFEAT EATING DISORDERS

Some statistics suggest that more than a million people in the United Kingdom are affected by some kind of eating disorder, the best known types being anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Approximately 40% of those with eating disorders have bulimia, 20% have anorexia, and the rest have “atypical disorders”, which can combine both bulimic and anorexic-type symptoms.

According to an equipe of UK researchers, people with eating disorders could benefit from “talking therapies” which aim to set them free from obsessive feelings. They said a specially-created form of enhanced Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) might work¹ in four out of five cases. Currently, the treatment is officially recommended only for bulimia patients.

The technique works using a series of counselling² sessions, which help the person involved to realise the links between their emotions and behaviour, and work out ways to change what they are doing.

Professor Christopher Fairburn, who led the project, developed two versions: one focused completely on the eating problems, while the other took a wider view, including also self-esteem problems. Both treatments involved 50-minute outpatient³ sessions repeated once a week for 20 weeks. Afterwards, the researchers found most patients had responded well, and that this improvement was maintained over the next year – a time during which relapse⁴ into eating disorder is most likely to occur.

Professor Fairburn said: “Now, for the first time, we have a single treatment which can be effective for the majority of cases, without the need for patients to be admitted into hospital. It is increasingly being used across the NHS⁵, and has the potential to improve the lives of the hundreds of thousands of people living with eating disorders.”

Susan Muir is one person who says that CBT techniques have helped free her of a long-term eating disorder. The 39-year-old, from Chesterfield, used diet and exercise to shed⁶ 13 stone⁷, but found that once this had happened, she found herself binge-eating then obsessively exercising. “The CBT really helped me deal with my self-esteem problems and made me feel very positive.”

Susan Ringwood, the chief executive of Beat, the eating disorders campaign group, said: “This research shows that people can benefit from psychological therapy even at a very low weight. There has been so little research into eating disorders and anorexia in particular, and this has really added to our knowledge in a challenging field.”

(Adapted from *Bbc news*)



GLOSSARY

- 1 be successful
- 2 advice and support given by a counsellor to someone with problems, usually after talking to them
- 3 someone who goes to a hospital for treatment but does not stay for the night
- 4 becoming ill again after having seemed to improve
- 5 National Health System
- 6 loose
- 7 a stone corresponds to 6.35 kilograms

READING COMPREHENSION

● Answer the following questions.

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|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① How many people suffer from eating disorders in the United Kingdom? ② Which eating disorders are the most common? ③ What is the main aim of ‘talking therapies’? ④ Who is Christopher Fairburn? ⑤ What is the CBT based on? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ⑥ Which other problems must be addressed in the treating of eating disorders? ⑦ Who is Susan Muir? ⑧ What does Susan Ringwood think of this research? |
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ACTIVITIES



VOCABULARY

● Explain in your own words the meaning of the following terms.

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|-------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| ① Atypical | | ⑤ Link | |
| ② Obsessive | | ⑥ Effective | |
| ③ Enhanced | | ⑦ Increasingly | |
| ④ Cognitive | | ⑧ Improve | |