

February 1-7 is Eating Disorders Awareness Week

7 Signs You Might Have Disordered Eating

by [Vincici Tsui](#) on Jun 14, 2017 <http://vincicitsui.com/blog/2017/06/disordered-eating-signs/#.WnCiBiMZPuQ>

Most people know about the three main eating disorders – anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder. Disordered eating, however, can be difficult to define.

[A survey conducted amongst over 4,000 American women aged 25-45](#) found that 3 in 4 women reported disordered eating behaviours, with 1 in 10 suffering from an eating disorder. 74.5% of the women surveyed also reported that “their concerns about shape and weight interfered with their happiness.”

Disordered eating is often ignored, or worse, celebrated or prescribed in our fatphobic, “wellness”-obsessed culture. Are you curious if your “clean eating” might be *too* clean? Here are some signs that your relationship status with food is “Complicated”.

7 Signs that Your Relationship Status with Food is Complicated

1. Food is Your Worst Enemy... And Your Best Friend

You agonize over every morsel of food that passes your lips, and pore over ingredients lists with a fine-toothed comb. Even then, you give most foods the side eye, convinced that Big Ag or Big Food are hiding something from you. No one seems to be able to accommodate your dietary needs (Gluten-free, sugar-free, dairy-free, GMO-free and guilt-free) and if you had your way, you wouldn't have to eat at all! Especially not after what food has done to you!

Yet at the same time, you *love* food. You love food “too much” – isn't that what got us here in the first place? Food is always there when you need it. It comforts, calms, soothes and numbs... and then makes you feel awful and guilty and you're back to being enemies again! Rinse and repeat.

2. You Categorize Foods as Good or Bad

For most of us, it starts innocently enough. As kids, we're all taught about junk food (though these days they're often being called “sometimes” foods or “fun” foods.)

Whether you use the term “good/bad”, “clean/dirty”, “real/fake”, the real problem arises when you let these characteristics transfer onto you. It's a “good day” if you eat “good” foods, and you admonish yourself for being “bad” if you eat “bad” ones.

3. You Live According to Strict Food Rules... And Beat Yourself Up When You Break Them

“Nothing with more than five ingredients.”

“[No food after 7 PM.](#)”

“No going back for seconds.”

It doesn't matter whether your rules are about what, when or how much you eat, what matters is that **you're in control**. And when you start losing your grasp, you do what you know best, and that is to **grab tighter**.

4. You Let the Scale Make or Break Your Day

You weigh yourself at the same time every morning. Naked, because “every bit counts”. You step on and off a few times, hoping that that extra half-pound is from stepping on the scale funny.

If the number goes down, it’s a good day. You’re doing “everything right”. Maybe you’ll even let yourself eat something. If the number goes up, it’s a bad day. You question everything you ate the day before, and wonder how to make up for it today by cutting back on the food and/or spending a few extra minutes at the gym.

If the number stays the same, then it depends if you’re a glass half-full or half-empty person.

5. Everything is a Calorie Count

The #1 thing for you when it comes to food is not the taste, the flavour, the texture, or even the cost. It’s the **calories**, and how it fits into your “calorie budget”. Same goes for exercise. Never mind the fact that [exercise alone doesn’t really promote weight loss](#), despite the multitude of other benefits – you know exactly how long you have to spend on the treadmill to “burn off” your lunch and “save up some calories” for dinner.

Whether you count calories, points or macros, food means nothing more to you than a number... that you want to keep as low as possible.

6. You Don’t Trust Yourself Around Food

Your house is a “No Snack Zone” because if there’s even a fun-sized chocolate bar in your home, you *know* that it’s going to end up in your stomach in no time flat, and you’re going to find all its little fun-sized friends too.

You feel *powerless* against the foods that you crave, and you’re convinced that you might even be addicted. You feel that you need structure, rules and control in order to eat well.

7. Your Life is On Hold Until You Reach Your Goal Weight

When you live in a larger body, it seems like the *world* wants you to put your life on hold until you reach your goal weight. Chairs are too small, doors are too narrow, clothes don’t fit. But what if you are holding yourself back on things that you actually *can* do right now?

Are you telling yourself you can’t go out to socialize with your friends because there’s “nothing you can eat”? Worried that you won’t find love, have friends or land your dream job at your current size? Convinced that life would just be better if you lost the weight?

I Might Have Disordered Eating... Now What?

If you see yourself in some of these statements, remember that **it’s OK. You are not alone.**

As cheesy as it sounds, recognizing the problem is the first step. I will admit that even a year ago I was blind to how pervasive and problematic disordered eating really is, and now that I’ve seen it, I can’t “unsee” it in my clients, family and friends.

As a few first steps, I invite you to approach your eating with **curiosity, not judgment.** Question your food rules. Ask yourself why they are rules for you and how they have served you, then ask yourself what would happen if you let them go... Even if it’s just for a meal. As an experiment.