

Anorexia & Bulimia

QUICK REFERENCE COUNSELING KEYS Excerpt

A Princess Regains Control . . .

August 30, 1997 . . . The beautiful young Princess of Wales came to the untimely end of her life in a twisted vehicle of death. Heartrending grief from around the world shocked the Royal Palace. A sea of flowers and oceans of tears stunned the stoic British Royalty. Why this deluge of emotion from so many people who never really knew Diana personally? Why did the whole world pause with such overflow of grief to mourn a lovely photographic icon? Clearly she was more than just an object of popularity and gossip. Diana communicated depth and vulnerability and the sadness of having lost control over her own life. Who has not experienced feeling out of control? Instead of being self-focused, however, she became focused on others. Despite her own personal struggles, she reached out and touched the ill, the lepers, and the dying . . . she cared from her heart.

*“Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.”
(Romans 12:21)*

Q: “How do I know if I have a compulsive eating disorder?”

Ask yourself this question, *Do I feel a compulsion to avoid the intake of food or to eliminate food or fat, and does that compulsion now have mastery over me?* Those struggling with anorexia and bulimia feel enslaved—they know they are not free.

*“Whatever overcomes a person,
to that he is enslaved.”
(2 Peter 2:19)*

Q: “What’s the difference between overeating and bulimia?”

An overeater may have little concern about being overweight, while the bulimic is consumed with body image and self-loathing.

*“Wretched man that I am! Who will
deliver me from this body of death?”
(Romans 7:24)*

Q: “What roles do ego and vanity play in anorexia?”

None. Ego is not the issue. Anorexics eat less and less in an effort to become smaller and smaller because of their self-effacing desire to simply disappear. Deep-rooted insecurity is at the root of anorexia.

*“Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.”
(Psalm 55:6)*

Physical Clues of an Eating Disorder

- Blood cell abnormalities
- Bone problems
- Bowel dysfunction
- Dental problems
- Digestive problems
- Glandular problems
- Hair loss
- Heart problems
- Hypoglycemia
- Kidney failure
- Menstrual problems
- Mental difficulties
- Musculoskeletal problems
- Vision problems
- Weight swings or drops

*“For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my iniquity,
and my bones waste away.”
(Psalm 31:10)*

The Hunger for Love

Eating disorders are merely symptoms of the surfacing problems, but are not the underlying, actual problem.¹

Those with eating disorders experience . . .

- **Confusion** over values—what is most important
- **Deception** of self and others
- **Depression** over feeling “fat” when you weigh what is appropriate for your height or even when you “look like skin and bones”
- **Compulsion** for some area of control
- **Loneliness** from the desire to avoid discovery
- **Low self-worth** because personal value is based on appearance²
- **People pleasing** with an excessive desire for approval
- **Perfectionism** from the belief that everything must fit just right or it’s horrible

*“Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?
Or am I trying to please man?
If I were still trying to please man,
I would not be a servant of Christ.”
(Galatians 1:10)*

Key Verse to Memorize

*“Rejoice in hope, be patient in
tribulation, be constant in prayer.”
(Romans 12:12)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Psalm 139:1–18, 23–24

Know Your True Identity³

- Know that if you have come into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, your *true identity* is in *Christ Himself*. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Know that the *old “you” died*. (Galatians 2:20)
- Know that even in the midst of your trials, you are totally *accepted by the Father*. (Isaiah 41:10)
- Know that the Spirit of Christ will produce *His control in you*. (Galatians 5:22–23)
- Know that your *freedom comes through Christ*. (Romans 8:2)

“For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in.”
(Psalm 27:10)

Acknowledging Your Need

- **Agree** to get a thorough medical checkup. This condition is life threatening! (Proverbs 27:12)
- **Attend** weekly (or regular) sessions with a knowledgeable, professional counselor. (Proverbs 23:12)
- **Acquire** as much knowledge about eating disorders as possible—for yourself and for those close to you. (Proverbs 24:14)
- **Admit** your inability to control the eating pattern. (James 5:16)
- **Abandon** the idea that you just need more willpower. This is not a diet problem. (2 Corinthians 10:4–5; 12:9–10)
- **Allow** yourself to forgive those who have hurt you . . . and even to forgive yourself. (Colossians 3:13)
- **Act** in total faith on God’s power to rescue you. (Psalm 71:1–3)

Related Topics . . .

- Depression:
Walking from Darkness into the Dawn
- Guilt:
Living Guilt Free
- Overeating:
Freedom from Food Fixation
- Perfectionism:
The Push to Perform
- Rejection:
Healing a Wounded Heart
- Self-Worth:
Discerning Your God-Given Value

HOPE FOR THE HEART’s *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today’s problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

Anorexia & Bulimia:
Control That is Out of Control.

If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).

1. Peggy Claude-Pierre, *The Secret Language of Eating Disorders: The Revolutionary New Approach to Understanding and Curing Anorexia and Bulimia* (New York: Times, 1997), 23.
2. For this section see Raymond E. Vath, *Counseling Those with Eating Disorders*, vol. 4, Resources for Christian Counseling, ed. Gary R. Collins 14. (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 39–44; Pam W. Vredevelt et al., *The Thin Disguise: Understanding and Overcoming Anorexia and Bulimia*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 33–45.
3. See Claude-Pierre, *The Secret Language of Eating Disorders: The Revolutionary New Approach to Understanding and Curing Anorexia and Bulimia*; Pam W. Vredevelt and Joyce Whitman, *Walking a Thin Line: Anorexia and Bulimia, the Battle Can Be Won* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1985), 208–14.



HOPE
for the Heart
*Together . . . Changing Minds.
Changing Hearts. Changing Lives.*

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