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### Bulimia

Bulimia is a disorder that evolves from a distorted body image. The victims of this disorder have cycles of bingeing on an abnormally large amount of food and then forcing themselves to purge or regurgitate all the food. Bulimia is most common in white upper-middle class females between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five, but bulimia does not discriminate. The disorder has been growing in demographics to include men and many other nationalities. Many people affected by bulimia have been a victim of some type of physical, mental, or verbal abuse.

I had the opportunity to work in an eating disorder outpatient clinic as the director of the exercise department. Many of the bulimic patients had numerous other compulsions attached to their disorder, such as over-exercising. My job was to mentally and physically reintroduce the patients to a normal, healthy way to exercise. Along with over-exercising, there were many other compulsive disorders that accompanied bulimia. Almost all of the patients had problems with diet pills, diuretics, laxatives, illegal drugs, alcohol, excessive spending, and so on. Most often, the longer the patients had been exhibiting the bulimic behavior, the more compulsive habits accompanied the disorder.

One particular patient was a 24-year-old white female from a very affluent family in Little Rock. This patient was a victim of sexual abuse at the age of ten by a family member. She began to restrict her food intake by the age of eleven, over-exercise by the age of twelve, and

began to binge and purge by the age of fourteen. The patient was admitted to her first in-patient clinic at the age of seventeen, where her symptoms were bingeing and purging, over-exercising, excessive diet pill usage, many gastric disorders, hair loss, and tooth decay. The patient stayed in this in-patient clinic for six weeks and was released. She was readmitted three times by the age of twenty-two before attempting suicide.

Bulimia is a physical deterioration that stems from a mental injury. This young lady was treated for the physical part of her illness when the treatment needed to focus on her mental status. When this young lady was recommended to our clinic's head psychologist and began treatment, the patient's therapy began to confront the physical abuse she had endured as a child. Since the abuse was not confronted earlier in her life, the patient had developed a distorted sense of body image and used the bingeing and purging as a sort of personal torture and torment. This is a typical response by abuse victims and generates from the blame they place on themselves for the abuse. Abuse victims often conjure the belief that they caused the abuse and begin to self-mutilate by performing destructive behavior.

Bulimia is a disorder that must be treated from the beginning and move forward. Many young women have had trauma in their life and defer to this type of behavior to cope with the pain they feel. Bulimia is a disorder that takes many years to nurture and develop into a full-blown mental disability. Bulimic behavior becomes so embedded in the patients' everyday routine that they are completely dependent on the destructive cycle. Removing the behavior is the equivalent of removing a patient's arm or taking drugs away from an addict. Treatment requires fine-tuned therapy for every factor of the disorder, and then the patient may start the long road to recovery.