

EDCA NEWS

| December 2017 |

Upcoming Events

Support Group: We host weekly support group sessions for individuals who are affected by eating disorders. Join us on every Thursday from 5:45-7pm at Second Presbyterian in Little Rock. Questions? Email edcofark@gmail.com.

See the schedule of upcoming support group topics below:

Dec. 7: Stages of Change and Eating Disorders **Dec. 14:** Body Image: Strategies to Stay Positive **Dec. 21:** Setting Boundaries

How Can You Get Involved?

Set up fundraisers in your area to raise money and awareness for eating disorder recovery. Here are some ideas to try!

- Craft parties
- Yoga nights
- T-shirt sales
- Hot chocolate stand
- Gift wrapping fundraiser



Welcome

Welcome to the Eating Disorder Coalition of Arkansas’s newsletter. Through this newsletter, we hope to provide resources for individuals who are interested in eating disorder recovery. The newsletter is intended to provide relevant information to mental health providers, patients, and loved ones.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Eating Disorder Coalition of Arkansas is to unify treatment professionals and all those committed in order to optimize the quality of life of Arkansans affected by eating disorders. We seek to advance treatment, awareness, advocacy, and professional support for the eating disorders treatment community in Arkansas.



Debunking Eating Disorder Myths

1. **Eating disorders are primarily about food-** "Just eat" might be your intuitive response to someone who refuses food — or to someone who's bingeing, "Just stop eating." Eating disorders have complex causes and can't simply be willed away.
2. **People who are normal or overweight cannot have eating disorders-** Not all eating disorders are determined by the size and weight of a person. An eating disorder is not always easy to detect based on weight. Bulimics tend to be at an average, or even above average, weight. Compulsive overeaters are typically overweight rather than underweight.
3. **You can never exercise too much-** Exercise can be very beneficial, but too much exercise and not enough calorie absorption in the body is harmful. Excessive exercise can be very unhealthy causing problems such as dehydration, fatigue, injuries such as shin splints, stress fractures, Amenorrhea, heart problems and arthritis.

Why Treatment?

Skip Hoggard, LPE-I, EDCA board member

People who experience eating disorders of all kinds are usually, at some point or another, faced with a fundamental dilemma – is what I'm going through a problem or a lifestyle? We can all look around on a daily basis and be overloaded with hundreds of conflicting messages regarding health, fitness, weight, food, beauty, and belonging. The underlying message behind all these conflicting messages suggests that we can be "perfect" if we only follow the right plan, or try harder, or buy the newest exercise machine – in other words, it's a lifestyle that one can choose. On the other side of the dilemma, people with eating disorders are being told by others that they are sick, unhealthy, scary, too thin, or even delusional. While we can often grasp and accept that an eating disorder is a significant, even deadly, problem, it's tempting to think that "I'm simply living the way I want and there's nothing wrong with it," rather than to believe that "I need to make a change before I experience damage that can't be undone."

The dilemma can be characterized as a question of identity – if I give up my eating disorder, then who am I? And if I truly believe it's a lifestyle rather than a deadly disease, doesn't it mean that I've "failed" if I recover? No one wants to face failure, and no one wants to feel like they don't know who they are or have no direction in life. Unfortunately an eating disorder often offers the illusion of purpose/meaning/direction/safety – all qualities that contribute to building an identity.

Treatment for an eating disorder – medical, nutritional, and particularly psychological – offers the chance to recognize that the behaviors are not an identity. The person HAS an eating disorder, the eating disorder IS NOT the person but rather a set of experiences that a person is going through. Therapy with a professional who understands treatment of eating disorders allows us to recognize and accept that we are far more than our behaviors, and offers a safe environment (in contrast to the conflicting messages in the rest of our lives) in which to nurture and build an identity separate from the behaviors. Treatment can be scary too, but people who take the risk almost always report that they're glad they did, and that they prefer a lifestyle that emphasizes the whole person – inside and out — rather than just parts.

Source: The Alliance for Eating Disorders