

Key Information About Eating Disorders (EDs) For Teachers

Facts

- The majority of people with EDs aren't underweight.
- EDs can affect people of all ages, genders, body sizes, races, religions, and ethnicities.
- EDs are serious mental illnesses that can cause serious physical problems.
- Kids who get teased about their weight, kids who are highly perfectionistic and anxious, and kids who are overwhelmed and seek to numb out are all more likely to get EDs.
- Any kind of food restriction—from dieting to food insecurity to medical problems that impact nutrition—can contribute to the development of an ED.
- Teachers carry great power with kids; those who model body-inclusivity, who don't speak negatively about certain body types, and who resist diet culture-oriented discussions can influence positive food-body relationships for the rest of a child's life.

What to do if you think one of your students might have an ED

- Talk with the child's parent/caregiver about your observations.
- Discuss your concerns with the school counselor/nurse/leadership.
- If the child is older, a quiet discussion about what you are worried about can be very powerful.
- Don't try to guide them yourself; EDs require professional support, and personal efforts could cross boundaries.
- Best initial response is for student/parents to seek an assessment by a therapist or dietitian with eating disorder expertise. Virtual appointments are often available. Pediatricians will need to get involved, but there's a risk especially if child not formally underweight that they will minimize severity.

Resources

Sick Enough: A Guide to the Medical Complications of Eating Disorders (Gaudiani)

[How to Raise an Intuitive Eater: Raising the Next Generation with Food and Body Confidence](#) (Brooks and Severson)

Raising Body Positive Teens (Darpinian, Sterling, and Aggarwal)

Intuitive Eating, 4th Edition: A Revolutionary Anti-Diet Approach (Tribole and Resch)

Reclaiming Body Trust: A Path to Healing & Liberation (Kinavey and Sturtevant)

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