



Supporting Through Connection



Perspective & Intentions

- Partial Hospital Program, Intensive Outpatient Level of Care and Outpatient Level of care
- Interpersonal relationships are everywhere
- Transferable concepts
- Supporting when it is beneficial and feels supportive to both entities

Overview

- Overview of Eating Disorders
- Understanding Connection
- Understanding the relationship between eating disorders and connection
- Barriers to Connection
- Navigating Disconnection

A scenic landscape featuring a bright blue sky with soft, wispy white clouds. Below the sky is a range of rolling green hills. In the foreground, a field of vibrant yellow flowers stretches across the bottom of the frame. The overall scene is bright and cheerful.

ED 101

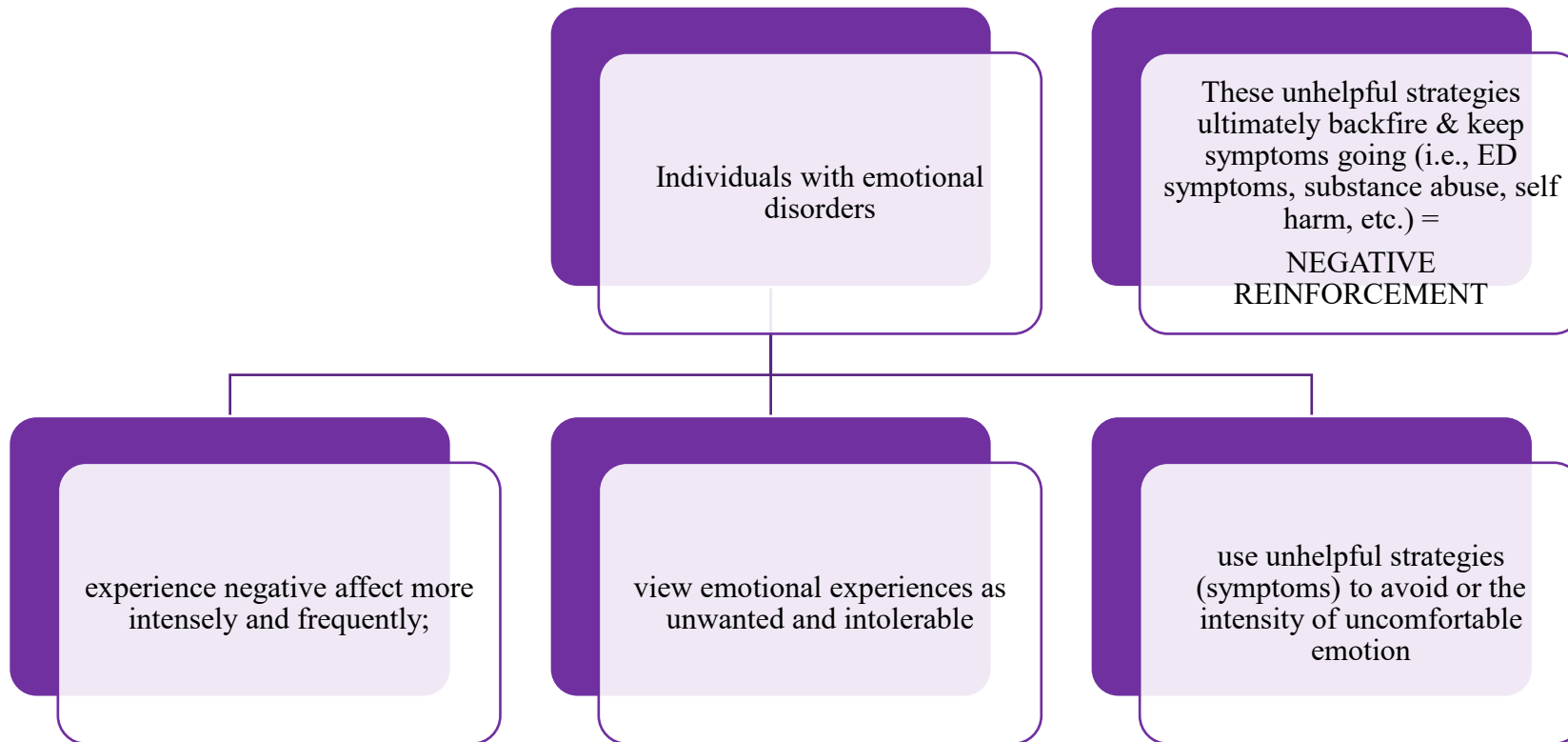
Eating Disorder Essentials

Eating Disorders are Emotional Disorders

- Eating disorder symptoms are “behavioral attempts to influence, change, or control painful emotional states”
- Eating Disorders may develop as an attempt to communicate
- ED behaviors function to regulate emotion. Symptoms provide momentary relief from uncomfortable emotions.
- Emotion Driven Behaviors (EDB's)



ED as an emotional disorder?





Behaviors

Above the Surface:

- Restriction
 - Chew and Spit
 - Hyper fixation on certain foods
- Fear of foods
 - Binging
 - Purging

Below the Surface

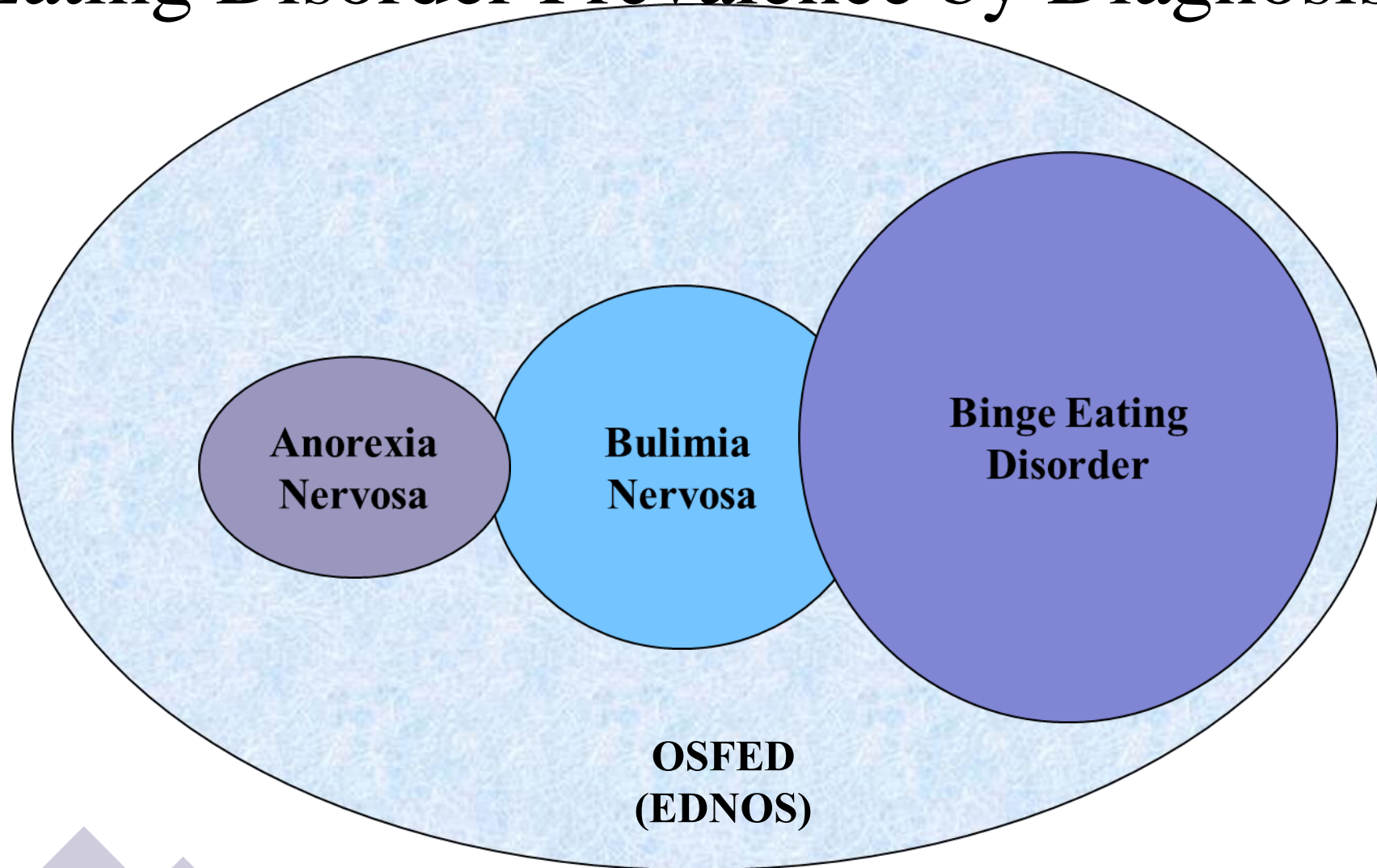
- Emotional Dysregulation
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Shame
 - Fear
- Trauma Response
 - Avoidance
 - Mindlessness
 - Perfectionism
- Neurodivergence
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Additional Co-Morbid Conditions



Changing face of Eating Disorders

- Diversity
 - Age group
 - Ethnicity
 - SES
 - LGBTQ
 - Size
- Co-morbidity
 - Trauma
 - Substance Abuse
 - Anxiety Disorders
 - Mood Disorders

Eating Disorder Prevalence by Diagnosis

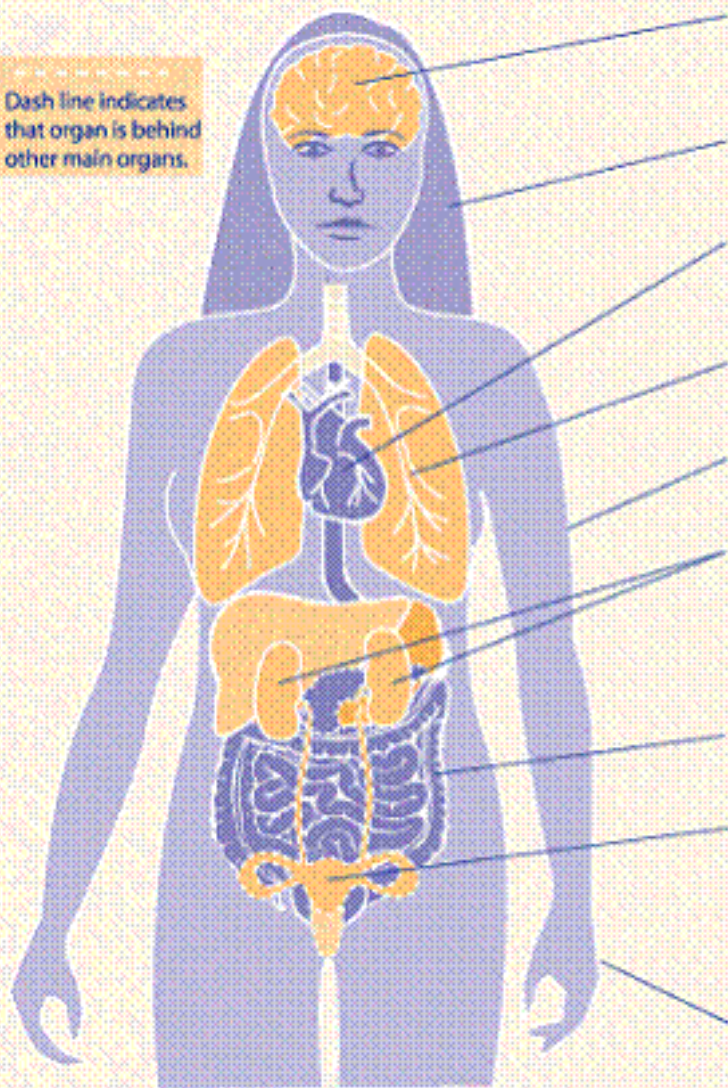


Common Myths

- Eating disorders are a choice. I can just tell loved ones to eat food and they will snap out of it.
- Doesn't everyone struggle with eating disorder/disordered eating and body image these days?
- Anorexia is the only serious eating disorder.
- As a parents, there's not much I can do to help my child recovery
- Eating disorder is a "girl thing"

Anorexia affects your whole body

Dash line indicates that organ is behind other main organs.



Brain and Nerves

can't think right, fear of gaining weight, sad, moody, irritable, bad memory, fainting, changes in brain chemistry

Hair

hair thins and gets brittle

Heart

low blood pressure, slow heart rate, fluttering of the heart (palpitations), heart failure

Blood

anemia and other blood problems

Muscles and Joints

weak muscles, swollen joints, fractures, osteoporosis

Kidneys

kidney stones, kidney failure

Body Fluids

low potassium, magnesium, and sodium

Intestines

constipation, bloating

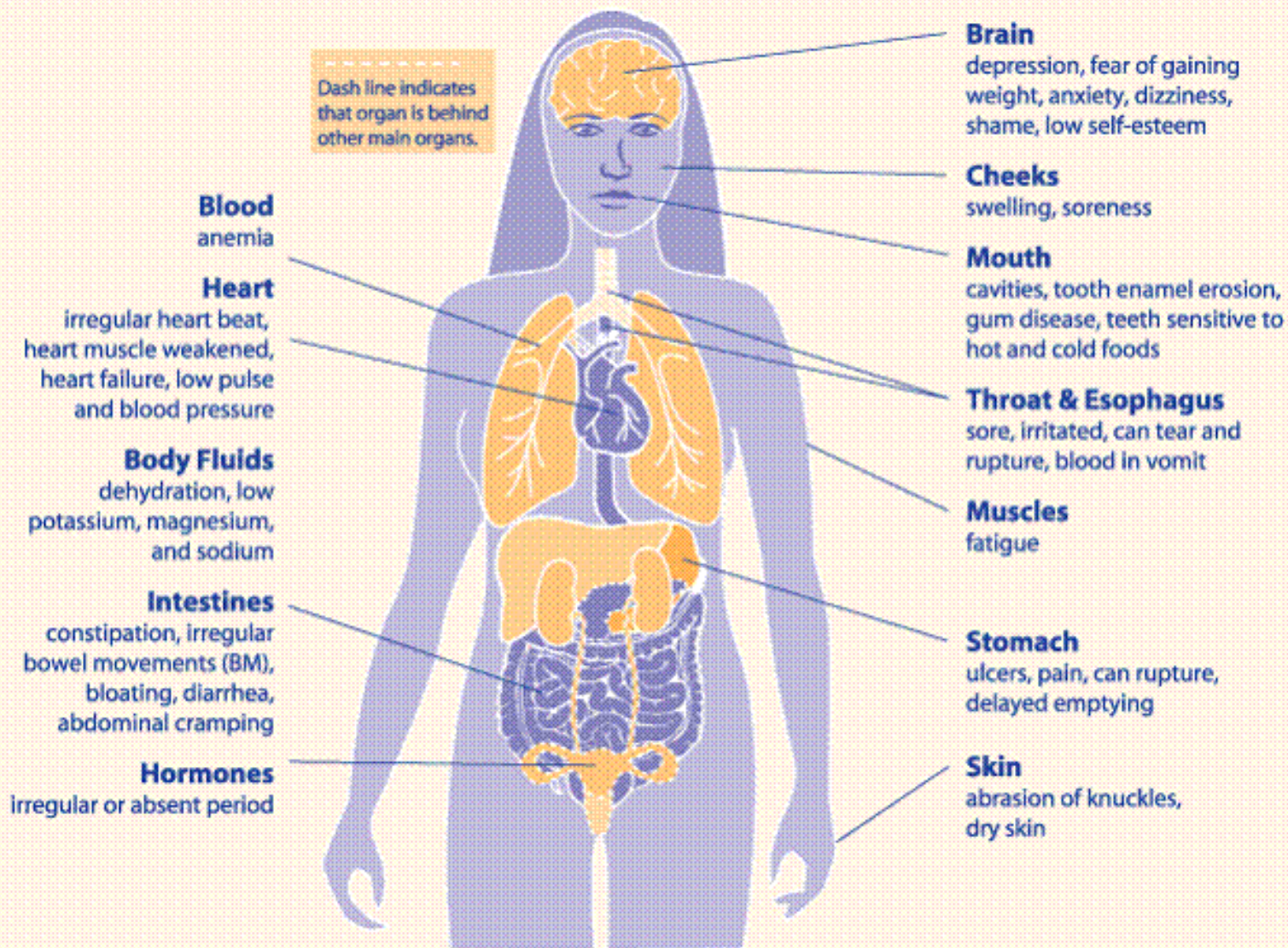
Hormones

periods stop, bone loss, problems growing, trouble getting pregnant. If pregnant, higher risk for miscarriage, having a C-section, baby with low birthweight, and post partum depression.

Skin

bruise easily, dry skin, growth of fine hair all over body, get cold easily, yellow skin, nails get brittle

How bulimia affects your body



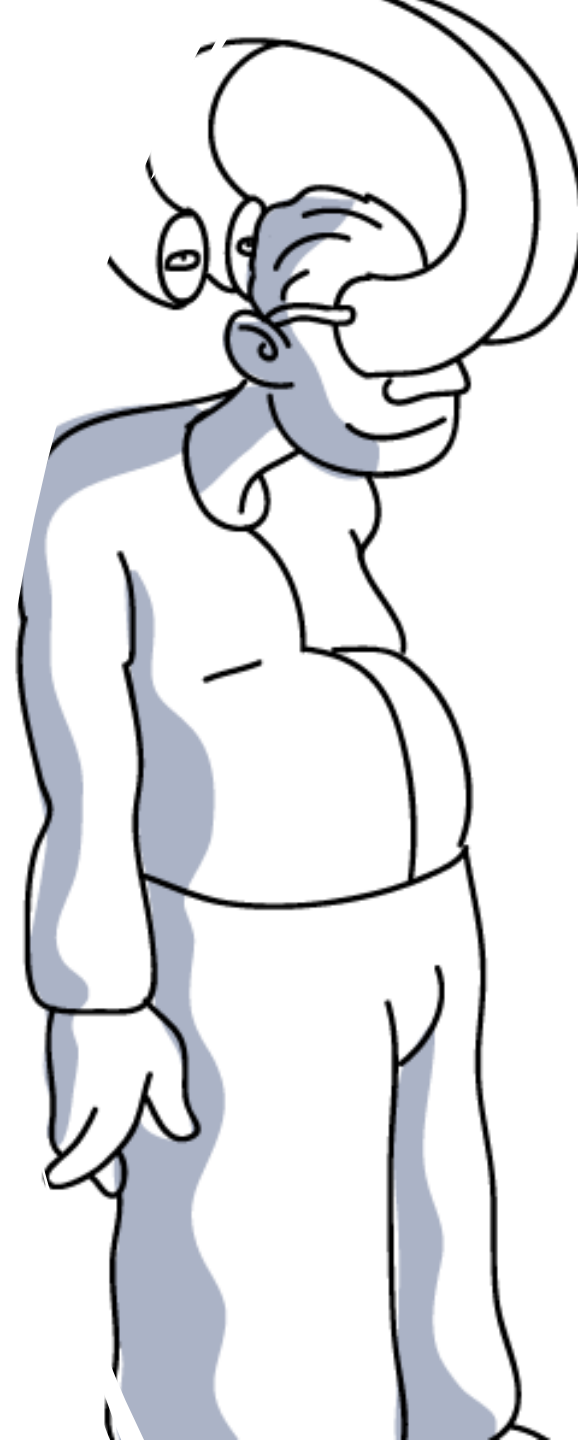
Renfrew Relational Approach

True healing for people with eating disorders happens most effectively within the context of a safe, empathic and supportive interpersonal environment

Importance of relationships is reflected in our focus on:

- Community milieu model
- Importance of group work
- Intensive psychotherapeutic relationship with Primary Therapist
- Incorporation of families through our multifamily groups and weekly family therapy
- Collaborative multidisciplinary team approaches

Eating Disorders are Egocentric



Everything you look for
and all that you perceive
has a way of proving
whatever you believe.



What is Connection



Connection

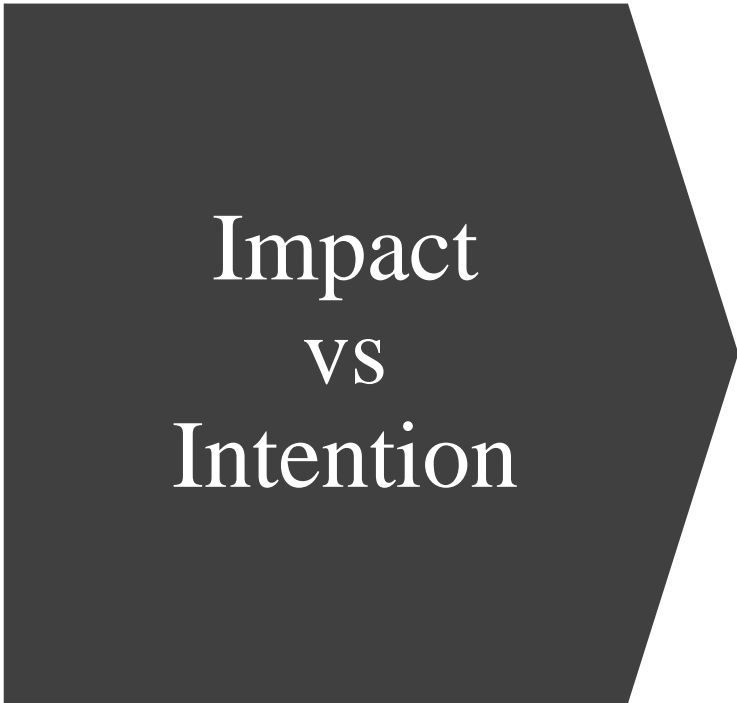


Recognition and
caring about the
impact on others

Encouragement
of authenticity

Mutuality

Approaching vs
avoiding



Impact
vs
Intention

“There is nothing to be scared of, it’s just a bagel.”.

Intention: Encouragement. To support and try to help individual with eating disorder see that it may not be as scary as they are making it out to be. To help them move into behaviors.

Impact: That being scared is “silly” and they should not feel scared. This could lead to judgement which will lead to bigger emotions and increased avoidance to enjoyment in food.

Approaching vs Avoiding

Support(s): *Sees that their loved on is struggling to get started on their meal. Sees they are perceivable upset and withdrawn.*

Approaching: Acknowledging what you are noticing. “Is everything okay, it seems like you might be upset and I can’t help but notice you might be having a hard time getting started? What can I do to help?”



Mutuality

Support(s): *Sees that their loved on is struggling to get started on their meal. Sees they are perceivably upset and withdrawn.*

Supports: Based on what you have shared with me it the past, I can tell you are having a hard time. I want to help you and I am learning how to understand eating disorder. Right now, I am not sure how to best support you, but I want to learn. What would be most helpful to hear from me right now?”

Disconnection

```
graph LR; A[Disconnection] --- B[Shame]; A --- C[Tone Policing, silencing]; A --- D[Non-Mutuality]; A --- E[Avoiding vs. Approaching];
```

Shame

Tone Policing, silencing

Non-Mutuality

Avoiding vs. Approaching



Avoiding

Support(s): *Sees that their loved on is struggling to get started on their meal. Sees they are perceivable upset and withdrawn.*

Approaching: Acknowledging what you are noticing. “Is everything okay, it seems like you might be upset and it seems like you are having a hard time getting started? What can I do to help?”


Avoiding: Is engaging in normalized conversations and behaviors as you would typically do.

Non- Mutuality

Support(s): *Sees that their loved on is struggling to get started on their meal. Sees they are perceivable upset and withdrawn.*

Supports (Mutuality): Based on what you have shared with me in the past, I can tell you are having a hard time. I want to help you and I am learning how to understand eating disorder. Right now, I am not sure how to best support you, but I want to learn. What would be most helpful to hear from me right now?”

Supports (disconnection) : Supporting in the way you believe they should be supported and what should work. Not being receptive to feedback on what would work better for them.



Shaming
Silencing
Tone
Policing

Support(s): *Finds food and food wrappers hidden away in the back of their child's closet while helping them find something they have misplaced.”.

Supports: “Hey I noticed what looks like food and food wrappers hidden in the back of your closet. What’s going on?”

Individual with ED: “It’s hard to explain.”.

Support(s) : “It can’t be that hard to explain, just tell me why you are doing it. Do you think I don’t feed you enough. What else are you hiding?”.



What is Connection?



What
is
Disconnection?



Connection vs Disconnection

How does it feel

Connection	Disconnection
Increased energy	Decreased energy
Increased desire to be in more connection	Turning away from relationships
Clarity, increased knowledge	Increased confusion
Increased sense of worth	Decrease sense of self



Relationship
between Connection
and Eating Disorders



Eating Disorders are a
strategy for disconnection

Strategies for Disconnection



Strategies we utilize to avoid predicted unpleasant emotions.

In relationships specifically, ways we avoid the potential of being vulnerable and risk non-mutuality

Think of a time

Someone wanted to hang out but you did not want to?

How would you handle this situation?

What emotion would impact how you handled this situation?

Would it increase overall connection, disconnection?

Think of a time

You were mad your significant other/friend/parent ?

How would you handle this situation?

What emotion would impact how you handled this situation?

Would it increase overall connection, disconnection?

Think of a time

Your significant other/friend/parent was mad at
you?

How would you handle this situation?

What emotion would impact the way you handled this situation?

Would it increase overall connection, disconnection?

What about if you were...

Considering telling a loved one you are concerned about their behaviors and their overall wellbeing?

How would you handle this situation?

What emotion would impact the way you handled the situation?

Would it increase overall connection, disconnection?

What is being avoided with an ED?

- Connection to self
- Connection to others
- Big emotions
- Undesirable emotions
- Rejection/Confirmation of Core Beliefs
- Physical sensations
- Change their body
- Unpleasant Sensory Experiences
- Uncertainties around vulnerability

Shame Shields



Moving Away

- Secret keeping
- Hiding
- Isolating
- “Ghosting”

Moving Toward

- People Pleasing
- Fawning

Moving Against

- Aggression
- Defensiveness
- Dominance
- Argumentative



Barriers
to
Connection

Barriers to Connection

- Individual vs Collectivist culture
- Diversity
- Fear of disconnection
- Shame
- Rejection
- Judgement from others
- Power dynamics
 - “Too needy” if you ask for help
 - “Weak” if you ask for help



Navigating Disconnection

How do you think and feel about disconnection?

What is your relationship with conflict?

What urges do you experience when you are in conflict with someone?

What have you learned about conflict?



Conflict & Disconnection





Emotion Coaching

Becoming an Emotion Coach

- Caregivers can take on the role of “Emotion Coach,” much like a new therapist would in order to support the loved one in increasing their emotional competence





Emotion Basics: Our own avoidance

Many of us have had a tendency to avoid our loved one's feelings. This makes sense, because:

- We want to free them from emotional pain.
- Their emotional pain causes us emotional pain (and we avoid emotions too).
- We don't know what else to say. We surely don't want to make her pain worse.
- We don't agree with or understand the pain.
- We weren't taught how to respond to emotional pain such as : vulnerability, anger, etc.

Steps of Emotion Coaching

1. Attend to emotion
2. Label and express the emotion
3. Validate the emotion





1. Attend to Emotion


- **How:**
 - Notice and pay attention to emotion cues- subtle or overt; high or low intensity
- **Why:**
 - Attending to an emotion communicates caring, concern and togetherness.
 - It also allows the emotional experience to happen, without doing anything (i.e, use a symptom) to avoid it/change

Attending to Emotions

Trying to focus on the process through all the content.

Content: “You aren’t listening to me!”.

Process: “I feel hurt to because I don’t feel heard, understood or am met with mutuality.”.



READING

2. Label and Express It

Physical Sensations

What I'm feeling in my body right now

Thoughts

What I'm thinking of right now

Behaviors/Urges

What I'm actually doing or having the urge to do in this moment

2. Label and Express It

Why:

- Naming the emotion increases your loved ones understanding of their own emotional experience & is opportunity for you to connect & show you are attempting to support & understand them

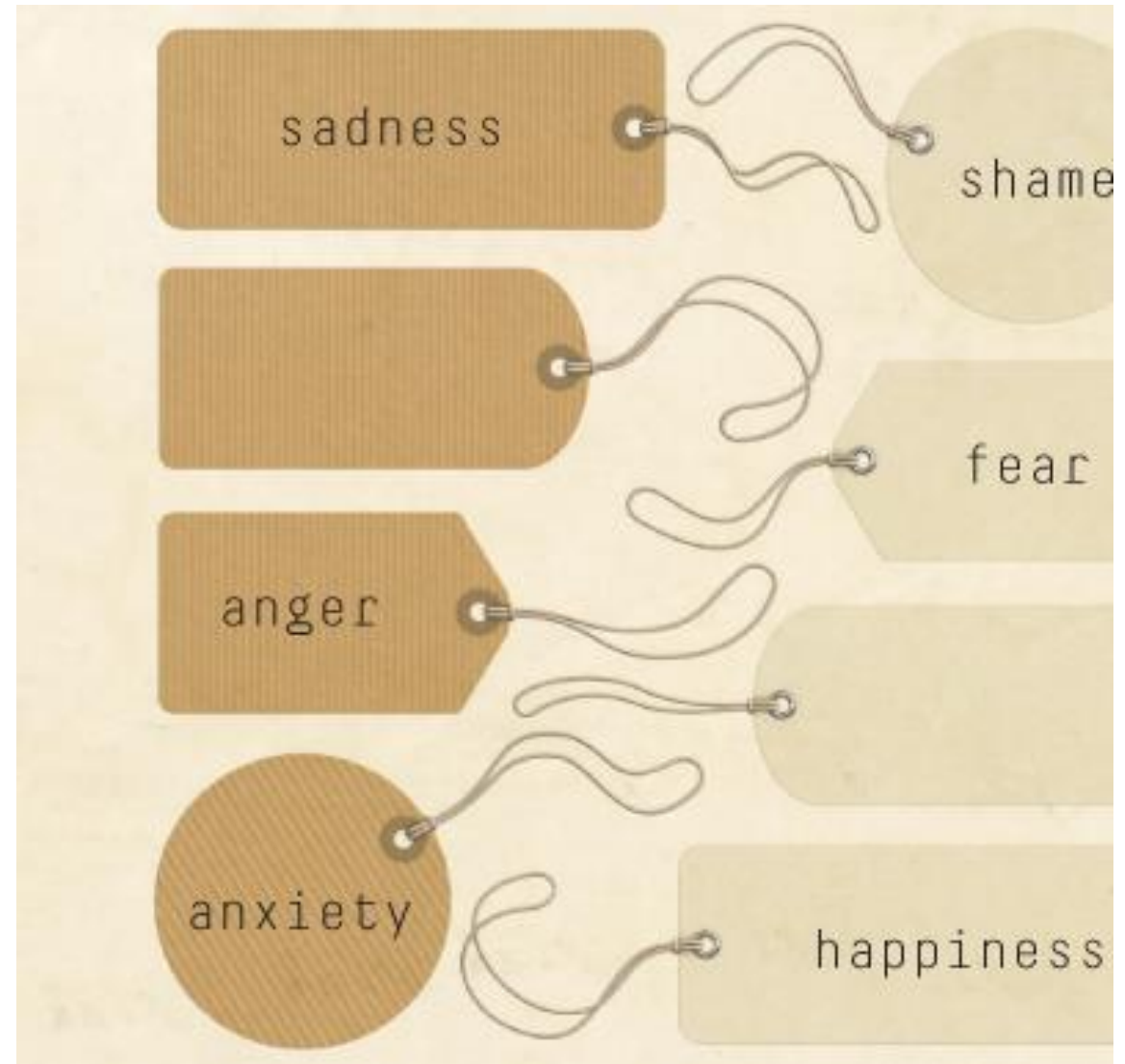
Examples:

- “You look depressed, anxious, angry”
- “I notice you are fidgety, tense”

Important things to consider when reflecting the emotion

- the tone & volume of your voice
- verbal pace
- posture

It's not what you say – it's how you convey!





3. Validate It

How:

- Put yourself in your loved one's shoes
 - show understanding of the experience—
 - You have to accept/allow/validate emotions that are different from what you expected or hard for you to understand
- Resist the temptation to:
 - always going for “the bright side”,
 - explaining with logic
 - correcting the reality

From BUT to BECAUSE or AND...

“I get how you would have felt that way
BUT...”

is transformed into:

**“I get how you would have felt that way
BECAUSE...”**

**“I get that you may feel that way. If I had
those thoughts and beliefs, I would feel the
same way AND....”**

And remember... it won't always “make
sense” to you or reflect the “reality” of what
happened, and that's ok!

Emotion Coaching Starting Points...

Of course you feel _____ because...

It makes sense you feel _____ because...

I can see why you'd feel _____ because...

Your feelings are valid because..... _____

No wonder you feel _____ because....

Thank you



Questions?

