

If You Think It's Just About Food...Think Again.

February 1-7, 2009 is National Eating Disorder Awareness Week in Canada and we want to take this opportunity to raise awareness about the growing number of people who are struggling with faulty body image and eating disorders. We are a group of teens who have all struggled with an eating disorder at one time or another.

We feel it's important that people realize eating disorders are serious mental illnesses with dire consequences. Eating disorders have the highest psychiatric mortality rate of any psychiatric condition. These are not self-inflicted disorders. It's important not to 'blame' people who develop an eating disorder. They are complex disorders that have no one cause or cure. These problems are not really about food, but about underlying issues unique to each individual. Addressing the problem involves coordinated efforts from school education programmes, public awareness and health promotion activities, health professionals and access to services at community and inpatient levels.

It's a myth that we always look like we are wasting away. Someone can be struggling with an eating disorder and still be a 'normal' weight. Consider your words carefully. Please do not pass on negative comments about body types. Your comments hurt us all.

As youth, we are surrounded by media messages focusing on the obesity 'epidemic,' with the overwhelming message being that fat is bad - very bad - while being thin is admirable and good. The celebrities we follow are always being scrutinized by the public for being too fat or too thin. We want to focus on more important issues, not on how people look.

Help us all stop worrying about fatness and weight.

Help us all appreciate healthy living.

Help us all feel good about who we are.

By the Youth Advisory Group of the Eating Disorder Program at St. Joseph's Care Group