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Brenna Bray, PhD

NourishED Research Foundation (Boulder, CO, USA)

National University of Natural Medicine (Portland, OR, USA)

Naropa University (Boulder, CO, USA)

Lessons from Binge Eating Disorder Experts on Environment, Mental Health, Clinical Factors and Treatment Options that Impact Eating Disorder

Between 10%-40% of individuals will experience an eating disorder (ED) at some point in their lifetime, including anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder (BED), and otherwise specified feeding and eating disorders (OSFED). While anorexia tends to be the most commonly recognized and detected ED, BED is by far the most prevalent, with 22-31% of individuals estimated to experience BED at some point in their lifetime. BED prevalence rates are similar to those of substance related and addictive disorders (SRADs), anxiety, and depression (~16-30% vs 5% prevalence of anorexia). Moreover, ~95% of individuals who meet diagnostic criteria for BED never receive a formal diagnosis or self-recognition, suggesting prevalence rates are higher than estimated. Broadly, EDs are characterized by persistent disturbances of eating-related behaviors that result in altered food consumption or absorption. While this categorization focuses on feeding and eating behaviors, EDs are bio-psycho-social and impact physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive, and social function. For example, BED is characterized by episodes of rapidly consuming objectively large amounts of food in discreet time periods, due to loss of control, associated with distress, guilt, and shame, occurring at least weekly for at least three months. BED is also associated with a complex health sequela that includes high co-occurrence (65-85%) with adverse childhood and lifetime experiences, PTSD, SRADs, depression, anxiety, ADD/ADHD, as well as overweight, obesity, diabetes, and cardiometabolic disorder in adults. These comorbidities often go undiagnosed, contributing to BED development and maintenance. This presentation will review environment and risk factors associated with BED, as identified by experts in the fields (researchers, clinicians, and healthcare administrators). Clinical factors, treatment options, and clinical gaps will also be addressed.

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Biography

Dr. Bray is a PhD researcher, educator, clinician, and advocate specializing in eating disorders, mental health, and integrative health. She holds a PhD in Biomedical Science and Neuroscience with NIH-funded postdoctoral training in Complementary and Integrative Health. As founder and CEO of the NourishED Research Foundation, she leads initiatives to advance understanding and treatment of eating disorders. She is faculty at the National University of Natural Medicine and Naropa University and mentors research trainees. A certified health and wellness coach, she is also a columnist, Ms. Health & Fitness 2024 Runner-Up, and an avid yogi, meditator, and ultramarathon runner.