



# COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES BULLETIN

January | Issue 3

## Message from the Head of Department

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of most, if not all, individuals living across the world. Mandatory physical distancing measures have left many students feeling disconnected from their home campuses where support and services are typically available. The cumulative toll of these stressors is likely to have a significant impact on the health and well-being of students.

With the end of 2020 and the start of 2021, news of the vaccine brought a wave of hope. The bulletin contains information on issues we saw our student community struggling with most in the last quarter. This issue also features a factsheet designed by one of my students to spread awareness on eating disorders.

Lastly, we at Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) remain committed to supporting our students through the introduction of additional initiatives which we will be launching in 2021. Our students' perseverance continues to impress and inspire us.

Best Wishes,  
**Dr. Tahira Haider**

## Unhealthy Relationships in College

By Nida Zafar

### Are you in an Abusive Relationship?



Human relationships are made up of various behaviour, and all of these can be classified as healthy, unhealthy or abusive. Every relationship goes through ups and downs, but at the end these behaviours should be mainly healthy rather than unpleasant or emotionally draining. Whether a relationship is between partners, friends or family, at the core it should be healthy, mutually supportive as well as beneficial.

Some common signs of an unhealthy relationship:

- Makes you believe you can't do anything right
- Provides no space for open communication
- Shows extreme jealousy and discourages you when you spend time away from them
- Insults, humiliates or shames you
- Controls your behaviours, movements, and life in general
- Stops you from making decisions

Even healthy relationships aren't perfect, but they provide the space to address strengths, limitations and issues safely.

Some common signs of a healthy relationship:

- Emotional and intellectual intimacy is present
- There is direct and open communication
- Mutual respect and admiration
- Equal power dynamics
- There is space for conflict which is respectfully addressed
- Having respect for individual lives as well as for spending time together



People tend to stay in abusive relationships because:

- Unrealistic hope that the toxic person will change
- Fear of making things worse
- Feel alone due to isolation imposed by abuser
- Low self-esteem
- Loss of emotional investment and time

relationship, by listing how you are getting affected by the relationship

- Taking mental or physical space is a good idea
- Boundary setting is a great step in trying to fix a toxic relationship
- If your emotional health is affected, try individual counselling

What to do in case you are in an unhealthy relationship:

- Connect with your social support group
- Communicate to change the dynamic of the

## Unhelpful Thinking Styles

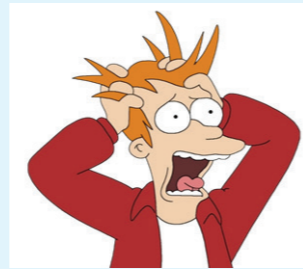
By Anushay Khan

When a person experiences an unhelpful emotion (e.g. depression or anxiety), it is usually preceded by a number of unhelpful self-statements and thoughts. Often, these thoughts form a pattern called 'Unhelpful Thinking Styles', and are usually the result of an automatic habit, occurring "out of one's awareness".

The persistent use of these styles of thinking can cause a great deal of emotional distress which is why the first step to counter anxious and depressive tendencies is to **Identify** the style of thinking:

- 1) **Mental Filter:** Looking at the negative parts of a situation while ignoring the positives.
- 2) **Jumping to Conclusions:** Assuming we know what someone else is thinking (mind reading) or making predictions about what is going to happen in the future (predictive thinking).
- 3) **Catastrophising:** Involves "blowing things out of proportion" and usually starts with "What if!.." or "Oh no!!".

- 4) **Black and White thinking:** Seeing only one extreme or the other with no "shades of grey".
- 5) **Shoulding and Musting:** Putting unreasonable demands or pressure on oneself or others.
- 6) **Overgeneralisation:** Taking one instance from the past or present and imposing it on all current or future situations e.g. statements beginning with: "You always..." or "I never...".
- 7) **Labelling:** Making global statements based on a behaviour in specific situations e.g. dropping a glass and saying: "I'm such an idiot!"
- 8) **Emotional Reasoning:** Basing your view of the situation or yourself, based on how you're feeling e.g. "I woke up today feeling weird... meaning something bad will happen today."
- 9) **Magnification and Minimisation:** Maximising others' positive attributes and minimising your own positive attributes e.g. "not taking credit for your efforts".



The next step is to **Challenge** these styles of thinking:

1. Check the evidence:

- What facts support the thought being true?
- What information shows that it isn't true all the time?

2. Consider the whole picture:

- Find all the causes
- Find the shades of grey
- be flexible
- Judge the situation, not the person
- Acknowledge the good

3. Change your perspective:

- If you were giving advice to someone you care about in this situation, what would you say?



## Everyone Procrastinates but Not Everyone Is a Procrastinator - Control It Before It Controls You!

By Maria M. Ayub

Procrastination is an action of postponing or delaying something. We are all familiar with this concept where we mostly know what we should be doing but we just do not

want to do it. Let's discuss some ways which can help us beat procrastination;

- 1) **Be Aware:** Notice and figure out when and why you are procrastinating, discover your underlying thoughts and emotions that make you avoid tasks.
- 2) **Chunk it:** Take one task at a time, breaking it down into smaller chunks, get started and then go step by step.
- 3) **15 Minutes Rule:** Plan to spend just 15 minutes on that chunk. Tell yourself that you can tolerate just 15 minutes. Take 5 minutes break, afterwards set the timer again and continue.
- 4) **Time Travel:** Visualise yourself



into the future and imagine the good feelings you will have if you stop procrastinating and finish a project or the bad feelings you will have if you don't finish.

- 5) **Relax & Focus:** If you are feeling overwhelmed, take a few moments to close your eyes and focus on your breath work, settle, and then return to the task.
- 6) **Change the Environment:** Looking for places with less external distractions and interruptions could help you focus more.
- 7) **Know your Strengths:** Use your strongest sensation to memorise things; visuals, audios, or

writing, what suits you? When is the time you feel most alert?

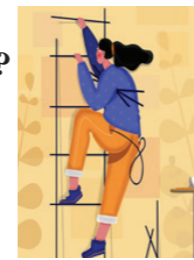
- 8) **Make a Commitment:** When you remember about certain task, seize that moment and set a deadline for yourself.
- 9) **Reward:** Set a reward for yourself before starting, no matter how small, and celebrate small achievements.
- 10) **Be Flexible:** Be kind to yourself, if you are finding it hard to beat procrastination, replace the negative thoughts with something more positive.

## Assertiveness

By Sabeen Khan

### What is Assertiveness?

We have all heard people say, "You need to be more assertive!" But what exactly is assertiveness? Assertiveness is a communication style. It is being able to express your feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and opinions in an open manner that doesn't violate the rights of others. Other communication styles you may have heard of include being aggressive, which is a style that violates the rights of others; and being passive, in which we violate our own rights. You have probably also heard of passive-aggressive. This is where someone is essentially being aggressive but in a passive or indirect way. For example, someone may be angry, but they don't act in an overtly aggressive way by yelling or hitting, instead they may sulk or slam a door.



### Assertiveness Techniques:

These techniques can be used across a wide range of situations.

**1. Empathetic Assertion:** This type of assertion can be used when the other person is involved in a situation that may not fit your needs, and you want to indicate that you are aware of and sensitive to their position. Examples of Empathetic Assertion:

- "I appreciate that you don't like the new procedure, however, until it's changed, I'd like you to keep working on it."
- "I know you're busy at the moment, John, but I'd like to make a request of you."
- "I recognise that it's difficult to be precise on costs, however, I need a rough estimate."

**2. Consequence Assertion:** This is the strongest form of assertion and is seen as a last resort behavior. It is usually used in a situation where someone has not been considering the rights of others and you want to get their behaviour to change without becoming aggressive yourself. In a work situation it may be used when standard procedures or guidelines are not being followed. When you use

Consequence Assertion, you inform the other person of the consequences of not changing their behaviour. It can easily be seen as threatening and therefore aggressive. Only use this form of assertion when you have sanctions to apply, and only when you are prepared to apply them. As this type of assertion can easily be seen as aggressive, you need to be very careful of the non-verbal signals you use. Keep your voice calm and at an even pitch and volume, keep good eye contact, and try and keep your body and face relaxed. Examples of Consequence Assertion:

- "If you continue to withhold the information, I am left with no option, but to bring in the production director. I'd prefer not to."
- "I'm not prepared, John, to let any of my staff cooperate with yours on the project, unless you give them access to the same facilities that your people have."
- "If this occurs again, I'm left with no alternative, but to apply the formal disciplinary procedure. I'd prefer not to."

**3. Negative Feelings Assertion:** Negative feelings assertion is used



when you are experiencing very negative feelings towards another person - anger, resentment, hurt and so on. In a controlled and calm way, you draw attention to the undesirable affect the person's behavior is having on you. This allows you to deal with the feelings without making an uncontrolled outburst and alerts the other person to the effects of their actions on you. Examples of Negative Feelings Assertion:

- "When you come home late, without telling me before, I worry that something is wrong, and I feel angry. I would really appreciate it if you could ring and let me know beforehand."
- "When you continually interrupt me when I'm working on the

balance sheets, it means I have to start all over again. I'm feeling irritated by this, so I would prefer you to wait until I have finished."

**4. Broken Record:** Children are experts at the Broken Record technique. This skill involves preparing what you are going to say and repeating it exactly as often as necessary, in a calm relaxed manner. This skill can apply in most situations. It is a good skill to use when you are dealing with clever articulate people as all you have to do is stick to your prepared lines. It helps keep you relaxed because you know what you are going to say and you can maintain a steady comment, avoiding irrelevant logic or argumentative bait. It is a particularly

good technique good for saying no. Example of the Broken Record technique:

- Kate: Can I borrow \$20 from you? Dave: I can't lend you any money. I've run out. Kate: I'll pay you back as soon as I can. I need it desperately. You are my friend, aren't you? Dave: I can't lend you any money. Kate: I would do the same for you. You won't miss \$20. Dave: I am your friend, but I can't lend you any money. I've run out.

## SMART Goals

By Adam Kureshi

Goal setting has a pivotal role in getting what you want, be it academic, professional, or personal progress. Effective and efficient goals help you become more resilient and hopeful about your life. Here is where S.M.A.R.T goals come—an acronym that has been defined in numerous ways but has retained its essence. The S stands for **specific**, as knowing exactly what we want to do can put things in perspective e.g. working on a particular assignment or preparing for a test.

Then being able to **measure** what we want to achieve is the M - i.e. to work on the various sections of an assignment or preparing different topics and testing how much you've retained. Keeping in mind goals need to be **attainable** which is the A, i.e. you could plan on

pulling an all-nighter to work at the eleventh hour or cram for a test - but we need to consider our limitations, capacity, energy, and health should we pursue this path.

And even if you do try to cram and work at the last moment it would be unrealistic to cover an entire course over a couple of hours and produce a good quality assignment worthy of feedback. Hence the R for **realistic** needs to be factored in to ensure we can manage the goal. Finally, the T for **timebound** ensures your goal has a time-line else it will probably remain in your head, lead you to procrastinate and make you feel overwhelmed. So, make your life easy not hard and take the smart approach.



By ZOYA NAUMAN AFZAL

# Eating Disorders & The Media

A guide to the role of media and other factors in developing eating disorders

## The Power of Media

- The media's influence is gradually expanding, especially through the advent of social media.
- Through magazines, television, and digital platforms, the desirable body ideal has shown to become thinner but paradoxically unrealistic to achieve over time.
- Through mass manipulation, influential figures online further perpetuate a thin, fit ideal. Males are pressured to become muscular.
- This leads to overwhelming negative emotions, like low self-esteem, shame, and body dissatisfaction, all of which are worsened by cyberbullying.
- Results in distorted ambition to reach beauty standard, prompting restricted food intake, crash dieting and other physical or emotional systems characteristic of anorexia and bulimia.



1 in 3 teens face cyberbullying

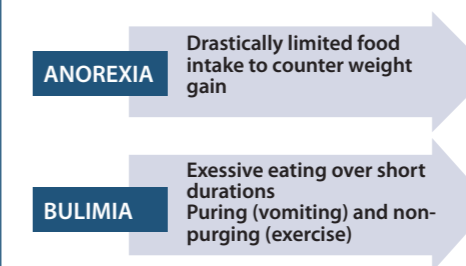
## What is an Eating Disorder?



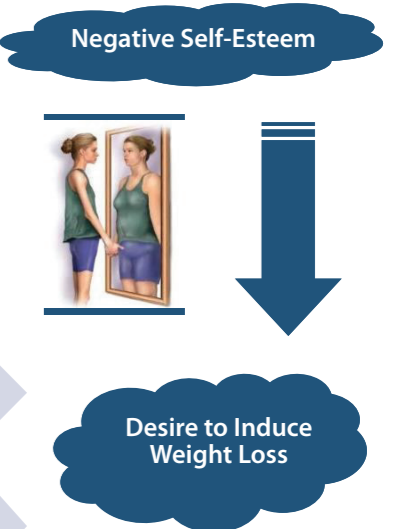
According to the diagnostic criteria, eating disorders are characterised by:

- Altered food consumption due to persistent eating-related behavior
- Impairment of physical + psychosocial health
- Fear of weight gain

It is important to differentiate between two major types:



The key similarity between these dysfunctional eating habits is a body dissatisfaction triggered by



## Profit-Driven Interests



The media thrives on consumer engagement.

Majorly driven by profit incentive, magazines, TV and other platforms hence depict body types as controllable in order to convince customers to purchase products.

This mass media advertisement sustains the cosmetic and dieting industries.

\$72 BILLION



## Alternate View



We cannot ignore the other possible factors contributing to anorexia and bulimia.

