

# NYU CHILD STUDY CENTER

CHANGING THE FACE OF CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

NOVEMBER 2006

*This monthly newsletter provides parenting and mental health information, as well as upcoming events and programs by the NYU Child Study Center.*

## ASK THE EXPERT: EATING DISORDERS

*Andrea Vazzana, Ph.D., is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in eating disorders at the NYU Child Study Center.*

**Q: What is the difference between overeating and binge eating? Is attendance at a program like Weight Watchers sufficient to treat binge eating?**

**A:** Almost everyone overeats every now and then, but binge eating is distinguished in two primary ways: (1) eating an amount of food in a specified time period that is larger than the amount that most people would consume during a similar time and circumstance, and (2) feeling a lack of control over eating during the binge. Because programs like Weight Watchers often include a self-monitoring component, such as detailing daily eating patterns, they can be helpful in decreasing food consumption. However, they may be insufficient in addressing the emotional antecedents and consequences of binges as well as the function of the binge episode. Also, if binges are accompanied by subsequent purging (i.e., vomiting), more specialized help is necessary.

**Q: Can't people who have Anorexia see that they are too thin?**

**A:** Body image disturbance can take the form of viewing the body as unrealistically large (body image distortion) or in evaluating one's physical appearance negatively (body image dissatisfaction). People with Anorexia may overly focus on body areas where it typically more difficult to be slim (e.g., waist, hips, thighs). In comparison to their other body parts then, they have "proof" of their perceived need to strive for further weight loss. Body image dissatisfaction is often related to an underlying faulty assumption that weight, shape, and thinness are the primary sources of self-worth and value. Whether

distorting or dissatisfied with body size, adolescents with negative body image concerns are more likely than others to be depressed, anxious, and suicidal.

**Q: My friend/child won't eat meals with me. How can she not be hungry? Does she just not like food?**

**A:** To the contrary, chances are she is overwhelmingly preoccupied with food. People with eating disorders may refrain from eating with others for a variety of reasons. For people who suffer from Bulimia or Binge Eating Disorder, there may be a fear that they will lose control once they begin eating and trigger a binge. People with Anorexia may take particular pride in their perceived discipline in refraining from eating, despite pangs of hunger.

**Q: How does an eating disorder affect a child's physical and emotional health?**

**A:** Emotionally, children with eating disorders may feel a tremendous amount of guilt and shame as a result of their disordered eating habits. They may increasingly isolate themselves, especially at meal times when their eating is likely to be scrutinized by others. Depression and anxiety are frequently co-occurring symptoms for individuals with eating disorders.

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In addition to our clinical services for children and adolescents, the NYU Child Study Center offers a variety of programs and services for parents, educators and mental health professionals:

- **Parenting Workshops: For Parents of Anxious Children with Tics and Tourette's Disorder**  
The goal of this workshop is to teach the parents of children with tics and Tourette's Disorder how to help their children cope effectively in situations that trigger anxiety. For more information, contact Dr. Alexandra Barzvi at (212) 263-5850.
- **Getting a Good Start**  
The Parenting Institute at NYU Child Study Center offers free 90-minute seminars for new parents covering the first twelve months of life. Babies are welcome. To register, please contact Jennifer Gelfand at (212) 263-8861.

#### Current Treatment Studies:

- **Organizational Skills Study**  
If your child is restless, inattentive, impulsive and has trouble with organizational, time management, and planning skills, your child may be suffering from Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. The NYU Child Study Center is offering free treatment specifically designed to help children with ADHD improve their ability to organize their materials, time, and school and home activities. For more information, contact Robyn Stotter at (212) 263-2734.
- **Anxiety and Decision-making Study**  
Does your child worry too much? Free anxiety evaluations are available for kids ages 8-17 as part of a study of decision-making in youth. Compensation is provided. For more information, contact Kristin Gotimer at (212) 263-0661.
- **Fish Oil Treatment Study**  
The NYU Child Study Center is currently recruiting adolescents ages 12-19 with depression for an omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil) treatment study. Study treatments are provided at no cost and assessments include a free diagnostic evaluation. For more information, contact Julia Perault at (212) 263-2494.
- **Parent Training Study**  
The NYU Child Study Center is currently recruiting parents of children ages 3-8 to participate in a 10-week research study that is examining the effectiveness of parenting classes. The parenting group will meet once a week for two hours. For more information, contact Dr. Camilo Ortiz at (516) 299-3754.
- **BMS Abilify Study**  
Does your child have repetitive movements such as eye blinking, neck rolling, or shoulder shrugging? Does your child make repetitive sounds such as throat clearing, coughing, or sniffing? If so, your child may be eligible for a new treatment study. The NYU Child Study Center is currently evaluating children and adolescents ages 7-18 with tic disorders or Tourette's Disorder to determine if they qualify to participate in the study and receive specialized, professional care at no cost. For more information, contact Natalie Wieland at (212) 263-8992.

## Events Calendar

### **Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Lecture Series**

*Eating Disorders: Prevention and Intervention in School*

**When: Wednesday, November 8**

Where: The Hewitt School  
45 East 75<sup>th</sup> St. (between Madison and Park Aves)

Time: 4:15 pm – 6:30 pm

Cost: Free

Register at [www.AboutOurKids.org/rsvp](http://www.AboutOurKids.org/rsvp) or e-mail [nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu](mailto:nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu)

### **3rd Annual Selective Mutism Support and Education Group**

*Coordinated Home-School Treatment of Selective Mutism: Parents and Educators Working Together*

**When: Thursday, November 9**

Where: NYU Child Study Center (Multipurpose Room)  
577 First Avenue

Time: 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Cost: Free

RSVP to Lauren Pressman at (212) 263-8696 or [selective.mutism@AboutOurKids.org](mailto:selective.mutism@AboutOurKids.org)

### **Movie Premier: Mozart and the Whale**

*An Asperger Love Story*

**When: Tuesday, November 28**

Where: Farkas Auditorium @ NYU Medical Center  
550 First Avenue (between 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Streets)

Time: 7:00 pm

Cost: \$25

Register online at [www.grasp.org](http://www.grasp.org)

### **Early Childhood Symposium**

*From Home to School: The Promise and Pitfalls of the Preschool Years*

**When: Thursday, November 30**

Where: Farkas Auditorium @ NYU Medical Center  
550 First Avenue (between 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Streets)

Time: 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Cost: Free

Register at [www.AboutOurKids.org/rsvp](http://www.AboutOurKids.org/rsvp) or e-mail [nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu](mailto:nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu)