



SPEED PROJECT

Sport & Prevention of Emerging Eating Disorders

Common Misconceptions About Eating Disorders

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There are some common beliefs about Eating Disorders that can influence the way a coach behaves.

Even though the coach should not take on the role of a therapist, it is important to be familiar with common misconceptions about eating problems in order to approach athletes in an appropriate and empathetic way.

Misconceptions about eating disorders can lead to underestimating the seriousness of the problem and the need to act as quickly as possible to address it.



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Myth: Eating Disorders Only Affect Females

Adolescent girls are a particularly at-risk group for developing an ED, but these disorders also affect males and can develop in people of different age groups, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds.



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Myth: An Eating Disorder Is Just a Phase That Will Pass

EDs are illnesses and must be treated and addressed as such. These disorders should not be confused with attention-seeking behavior; in fact, those affected often hide their condition and are reluctant to acknowledge the problem.

It is important not to think of these disorders as “just a phase,” because eating disorders do not resolve on their own — they require professional intervention.



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Myth: A Person Can Choose to Recover from an Eating Disorder

EDs are illnesses; they do not depend on a person's willpower or free choice. Those affected cannot simply stop having the disorder just because they want to or because others tell them to.

It is important to understand that this is not a matter of simple choice, but a complex disorder originating from and maintained by a range of different and complex factors.



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Myth: Eating Disorders Are a Sign of Superficiality

EDs are driven by many factors, including individual vulnerability, genetics, and social pressures. They are not a matter of vanity and are not solely related to weight or physical appearance — they are fueled by anxiety, the need for control, and comparison with social standards.



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Myth: The Family Is Responsible for the Development of an Eating Disorder

The family is affected when one of its members develops an ED, but it is not the cause of its onset.

Certain parental behaviors can be risk factors, as can some characteristics of the environment in which a person grows up, but it is always a combination of factors that leads to the onset of the disorder.



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It is important to remember that Eating Disorders are a serious mental illness that can be life-threatening if not treated appropriately.

They are not a choice, they are not a lifestyle, they are not a passing phase of development, they are not a form of dieting.



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