



## **NEDAwareness Week 2010, February 21-27: Key Messages**

The goal of National Eating Disorders Awareness Week is to attract public and media attention to the seriousness of eating disorders and the pressures, attitudes and behaviors that contribute to them.

### ***2010 Theme: It's Time to Talk About It***

This year the National Eating Disorders Association is stressing that it's time to talk about eating disorders. We live in a culture saturated with unrealistic body-image messages and almost all of us know somebody struggling with an eating disorder. Because this is true, we urge you to **talk about it.....and do just one thing** during NEDAwareness Week to 1) raise awareness that eating disorders are serious illnesses, not lifestyle choices; 2) provide accurate information to medical, educational and/or business communities, and 3) direct people to information and resources about eating disorders.

### **Join us, and do “Just One Thing”**

You don't need to have a lot of time, money or other resources to make a difference. Simply choose one thing you will do to help. Here's a few examples:

- Bring a NEDAwareness Week volunteer speaker to your school, work, or social group.
- Provide accurate information: Put NEDAwareness Week posters, pamphlets and informational handouts in your schools, community centers, medical offices or workplaces.
- Be a Media Watchdog. Write one letter in praise of an ad promoting positive body-image or in protest of an ad promoting negative body-image.
- Donate the GO GIRLS! Curriculum to a local high school: Empower youth to become critical media viewers.
- Maximize the power of your social networking sites: Re-tweet a fact about eating disorders, put up a link to the NEDA website and Helpline, encourage your contacts to learn more about eating disorders and join you in doing *just one thing*.

## **1. Eating disorders are illnesses, not choices**

Eating disorders are complex conditions that arise from a combination of long-standing behavioral, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, biological and social factors. As our natural body size and shape is largely determined by genetics, fighting your natural size and shape can lead to unhealthy dieting practices, poor body image and decreased self-esteem. While eating disorders may begin with preoccupations with food and weight, they are about much more than food. Recent research has shown that genetic factors create vulnerabilities (anxiety, obsessions, perfectionism) that place individuals at risk for acting on cultural pressures and messages and triggering behaviors such as dieting or obsessive exercise.

In the United States, as many as **10 million females** and **1 million males** are fighting a life and death battle with an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia. Approximately **15 million** more are struggling with binge eating disorder. Because of the secrecy and shame associated with eating disorders, it is very likely that many more go unreported.

## **2. Prevention, education and access to care are critical**

There has been a rise in incidence of anorexia in young women 15-19 years old in each decade since 1930; over one person's lifetime, at least 50,000 individuals will die as a direct result of eating disorders. In the United States, we are inundated with messages telling us that to be a happy, valued person, we must be thin and fit our culture's impossible beauty standards. Did you know that 80% of all ten year olds are afraid of being fat? The average age of sufferers is dropping rapidly (as young as elementary school), with peak onset among girls ages 11-13. As a culture, it is time for all communities to talk about eating disorders, address their causes, advocate for access to treatment and take preventative action. **You can make a difference: do just one thing** to initiate awareness, education and discussion about eating disorders in your community. If we all do something, we'll have a huge impact!

## **3. Help is available, and recovery is possible**

While eating disorders are serious, potentially life-threatening illnesses, there is help available and recovery really *is* possible. It is important for those affected to remember that they are not alone in their struggle; others have recovered and are now living healthy fulfilling lives. Let the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) be a part of your network of support. NEDA has information and resources available via our website and helpline:

NEDA [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)    **NEDA Helpline:** 800 931-2237