

EATING DISORDERS

The management of young people with eating disorders (anorexia and bulimia) is complex and multi-dimensional. From a psychological perspective, the issues generally associated with eating disorders include the need for the young person to separate from their family and to develop their sense of psychological and sexual identity. Optimally, this needs to occur in the context of family life, so that intervention needs to understand, work with and support the family, in a therapeutic relationship.

Some guiding principles when a young person presents with symptoms of an eating disorder include:

- 1 What is the general health status of this young person? A thorough physical examination and medical history is essential. An understanding of the onset and progression of the eating disorder should be included.
- 2 What is the family composition, and how do they understand what is occurring for their child? Is there a history of eating disorders in the family?
- 3 What else is happening for this child/adolescent? School, friends, relationships etc?
- 4 How have the parent(s) managed other developmental issues in their parenting of this child and/or their siblings?
- 5 Who else needs to be involved?
6. What have the family already tried in order to manage this problem? This may include previous advice and contact with other professionals.

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