

## RA Body Image/Eating Disorders Information Guide

### What's the Need?

9.1% of NAU students report experiencing an eating disorder (ACHA-NCHA 2019, n=529). In addition, 1 in 3 students report dieting to lose weight; however, dieting is a significant predictor of weight gain as well as eating disorders.

### How You Can Help with Body Image and Eating Disorders:

- Focus on non-appearance based complements of others, such as character attributes or physical and mental abilities.
- Minimize “fat talk” and talking about other people’s bodies in a negative way; step in when you hear people making fat jokes.
- When talking about food, focus on messages where all foods fit; minimize language that encourages guilt about eating; limit messages that encourage “burning off” calories with exercise
- If you suspect a resident has an eating disorder, approach them in a [non-accusatory way and express personal concern](#). You can also call counseling services for a consult (928-523-2261).

The Basics: *A little background information, soundbites, main messages we are trying to convey to students, actions to promote*

- Eating disorders do not have one set look: they affect people of all body sizes, genders, races/ethnicities, and ages.
- Anorexia Nervosa has the highest rate of mortality (death) of all mental illnesses.
- There are many warning signs that a person is experiencing an eating disorder, including an intense fear of weight gain, a misperception of their body weight, basing their self-worth on body weight/image, frequent weighing/skin pinching, secrecy around eating, very limited eating preferences, frequent dieting/diet talk, and avoidance of social gatherings where food is involved. Remember, a person will rarely exhibit just one of these symptoms, so avoid jumping to conclusions about a resident.
- Support is available on the NAU campus through Campus Health Services, including a registered dietitian, counseling, psychiatric, and medical support.
- A healthy diet can include a variety of foods-including the unhealthy foods too! Encourage balance between nourishing foods and “fun” foods.

### Putting it Into Practice:

- Create a “take what you need” wall with [body positive affirmations](#) and words of encouragement for residents. Encourage residents to leave affirmations/encouragements for others as well.
- Encourage students who you are concerned about to utilize the [ULifeline online screening tool](#), which assesses their eating concerns as well as other mental health concerns.
- Host an unplug event focused on reducing social media use. At the event, challenge residents to Marie-Kondo their phone and identify apps/social media accounts they follow which may cause

stress or contribute to their negative body image. If an app or account does not spark joy, encourage them to delete apps/accounts!

- Screen a viewing of a body positive show/documentary (Dumplin on Hulu or Embrace on Amazon Prime Video are both excellent!)

Reliable Sources:

- [National Eating Disorder Association](#): Includes statistics/facts on eating disorders, tips for building a better body image, and an online screening tool
- [NAU Campus Health Services](#): Information on scheduling medical, nutrition, and counseling appointments
- Ted Talks: [Life After Anorexia](#); [What is a Healthy Relationship With Food?](#)