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An Eating Recovery Community

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Body Image in Recovery: What Families Need to Know

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What is Body Image?

- Body Image is a broad concept that comprises:
  - How you see yourself and your body, which may include comparison to others
  - How you feel in your body
  - How satisfied or accepting you are of your body
  - How you think about your body (beliefs about your body)
  - How your life experiences impact our perception of your body

What it’s like to be in the body of someone with an eating disorder….

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Body Image and Eating Disorders

- **Negative Body Image (BI) is a primary activator of Eating Disorder (ED) symptoms.**

(Fairburn, 2008; Stice, 2002)

Body Image and Eating Disorders

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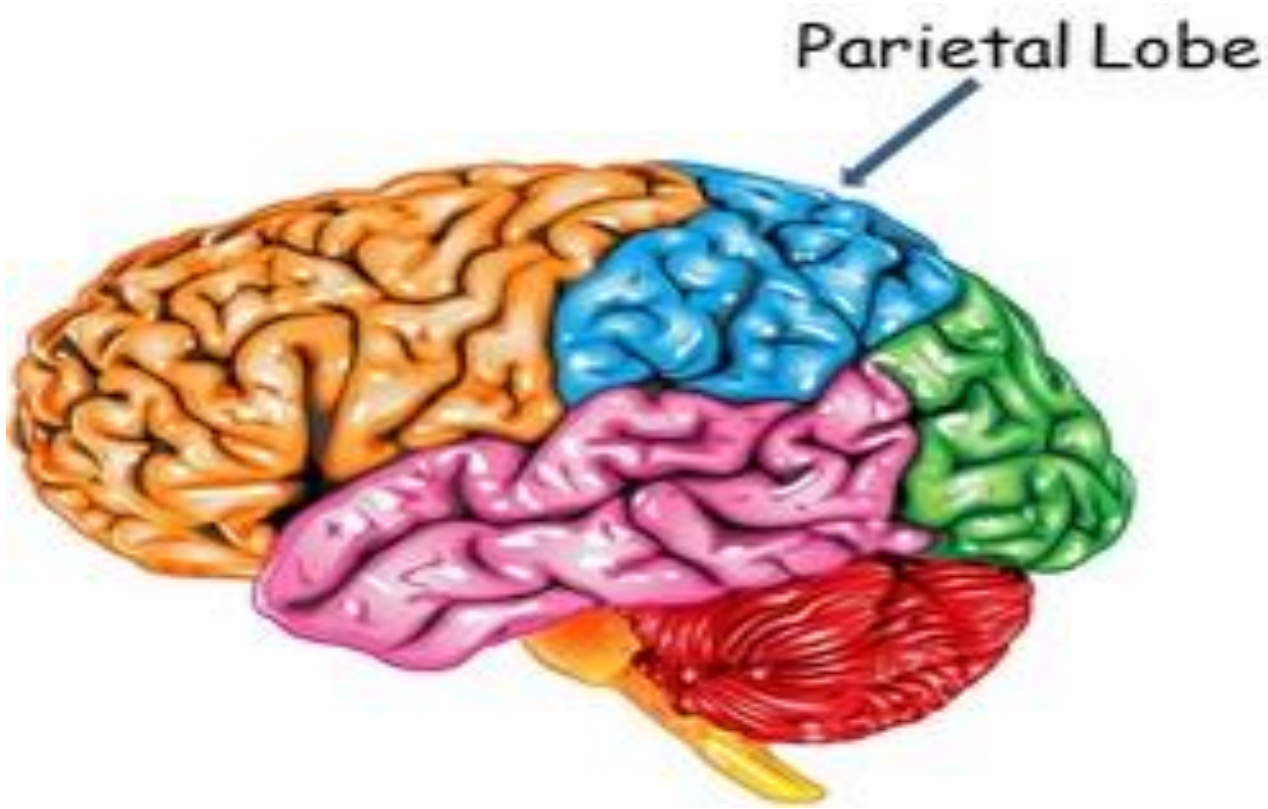
Eating Disorder Brain



(Hill, 2017)

Body Image and Eating Disorders

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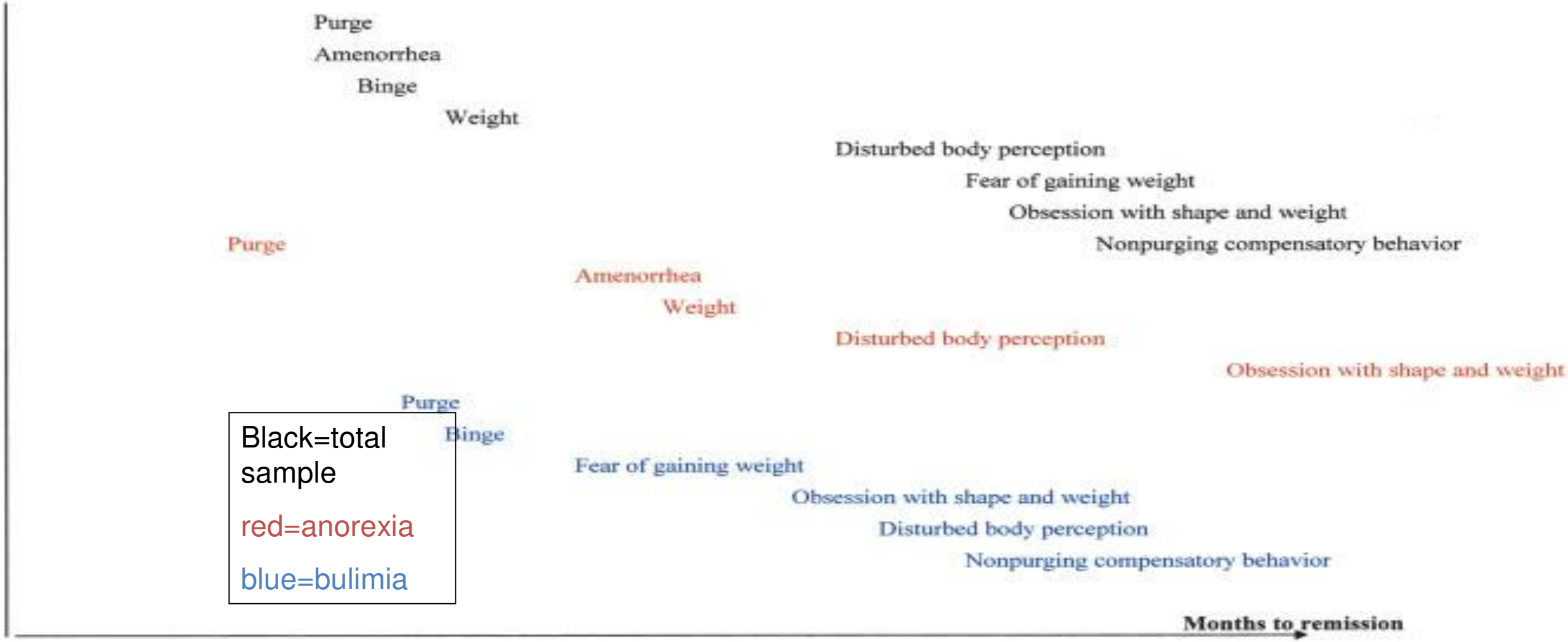
- **Negative BI is one of the final ED symptoms to remit and is a predictor of relapse.**

(Clausen, 2004)

Body Image and Eating Disorders

(Clausen, 2004)



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- **Individuals who achieve a full and sustainable recovery may need a <u>more positive</u> BI than general population.**

(Keel, 2005; Yu, 2013)

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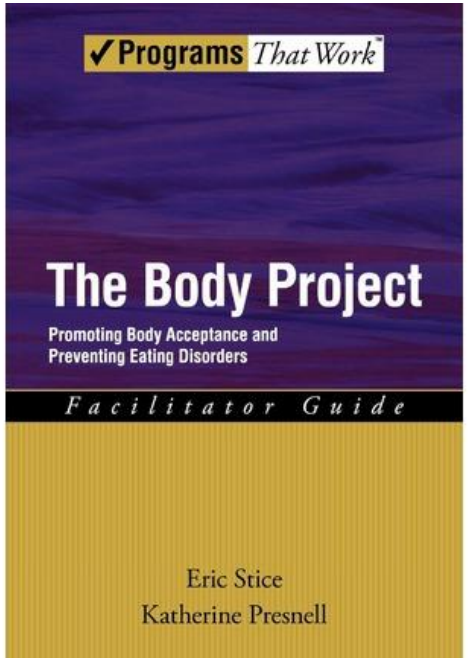
- **Majority of BI interventions are developed for non-clinical samples.**

thebodypositive



(Jarry & Berardi, 2004; Stice & Becker, ; Sobczak & Scott)

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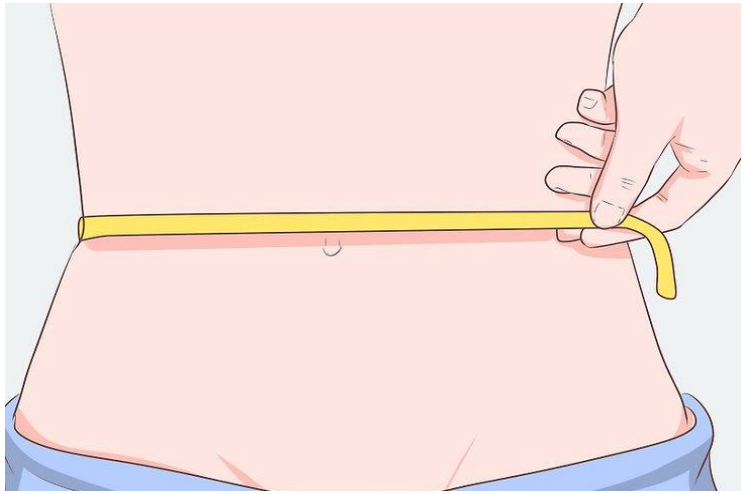
- **Typical interventions for negative BI focus on correcting distorted perceptions of the body.**

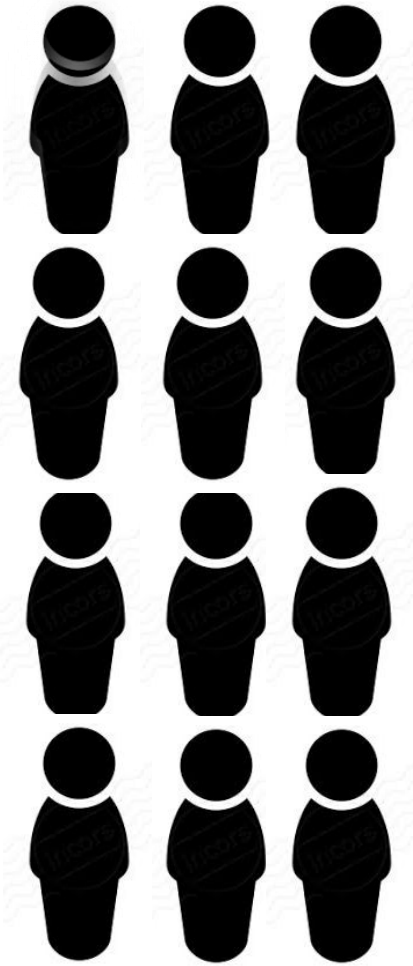


(Jarry & Ip, 2005)

Body Image and Eating Disorders

- What is a larger body?
  - The problem with BMI
  - The problem with “obesity”
- Prevalence of larger bodies in United States
  - 40% of Americans over the age of 20 are in larger bodies
- Prevalence of larger bodies in Clients with eating disorders
  - Up to 87% of individuals with BED and 33% of clients with BN or AN live in larger bodies

(Villejaro et al., 2016; Villejaro et al., 2012; Whitelaw et al., 2018; Hales et al., 2018)



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- Most Body Image interventions are based on fear origins rather than disgust origins

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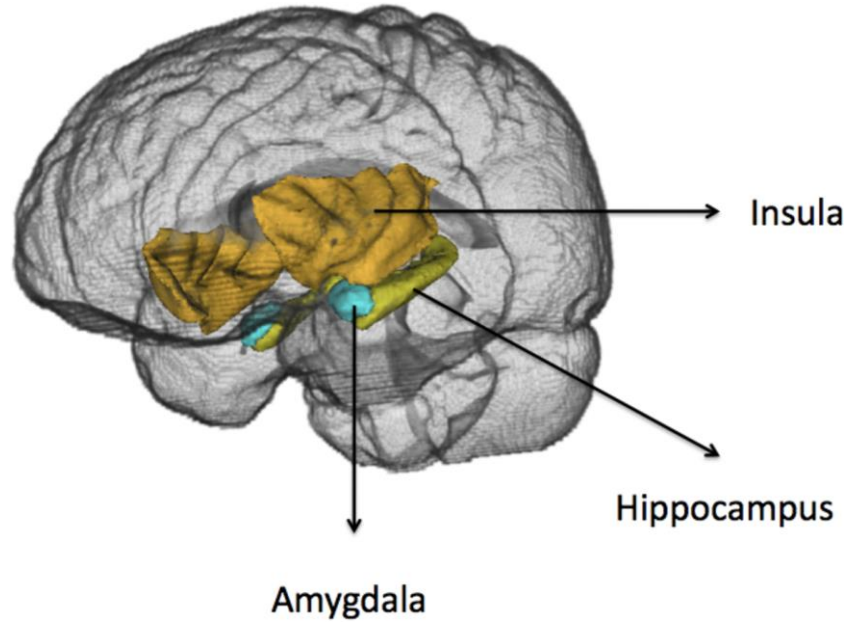
- Body image appears to be related more to disgust than fear. What does this mean?
  - In the insula rather than amygdala
  - Less responsive to ERP than fear-based reactions
  - Disgust is “impenetrable to reasoning.”
    - Reflexive and not based on cognitive appraisals.
  - Attentional avoidance might be more important than behavioral avoidance
- Low self-compassion mediates relationship between self-disgust and EDs
- Self-Disgust may warrant specific interventions



(Royzman & Sabini, 2001; Powell, Simpson, Overton, 2015; Bucchianeri & Corning, 2015; Palmeira, Pinto-Gouveia & Cunha, 2017; Steele, 1988)

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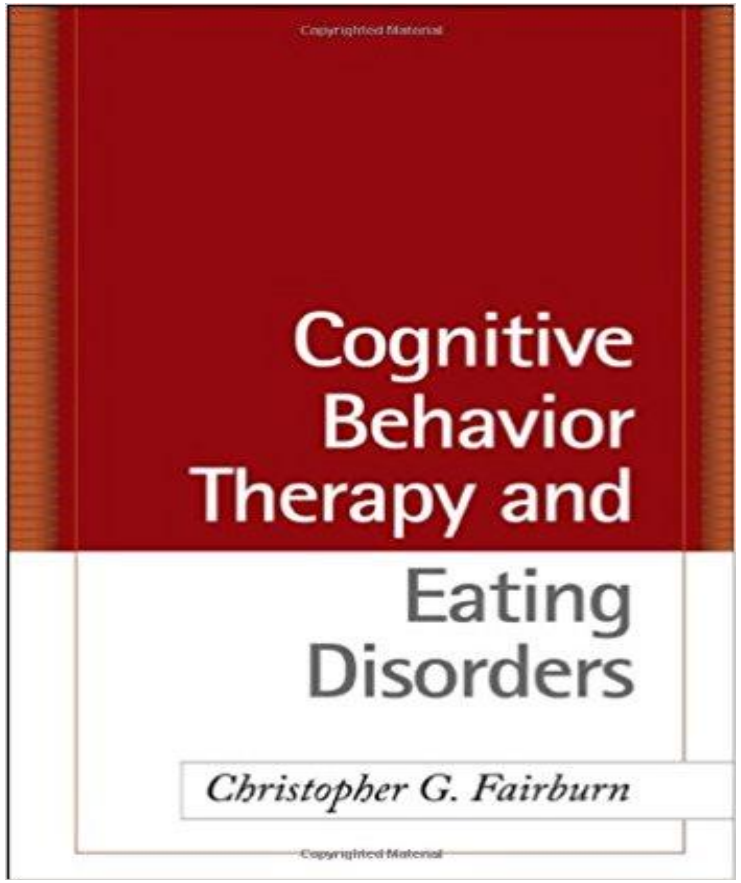
- **Evidence-based interventions (e.g., CBT-E) address BI and have been adapted to inpatient and day-patient settings, but they have not been evaluated in randomized controlled trials.**



(Fairburn, 2008)

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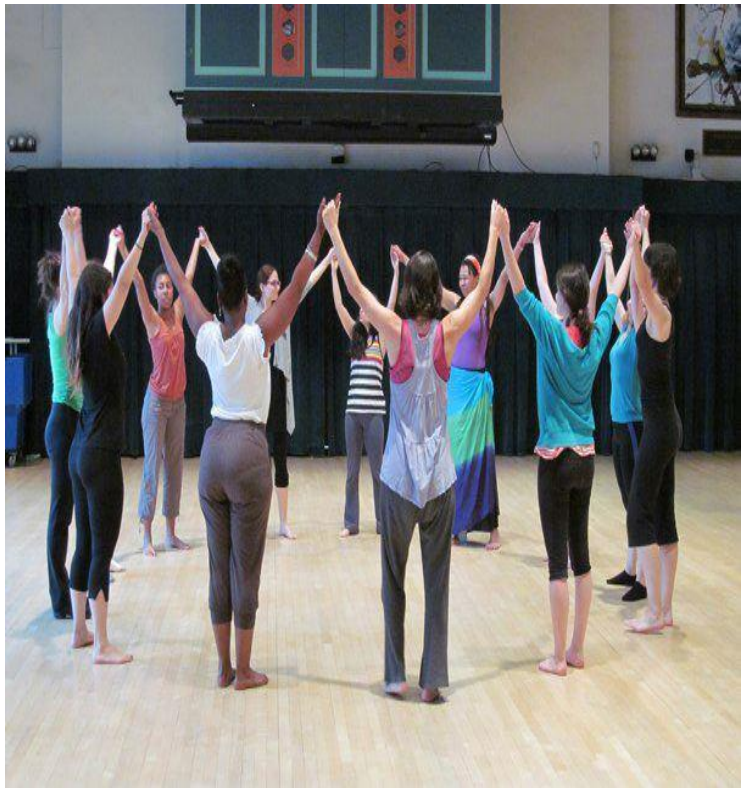
- **Experiential approaches to BI provide a comprehensive approach to the intricate nature of BI symptomology, but the effectiveness of these approaches has not been evaluated in well-designed research studies.**



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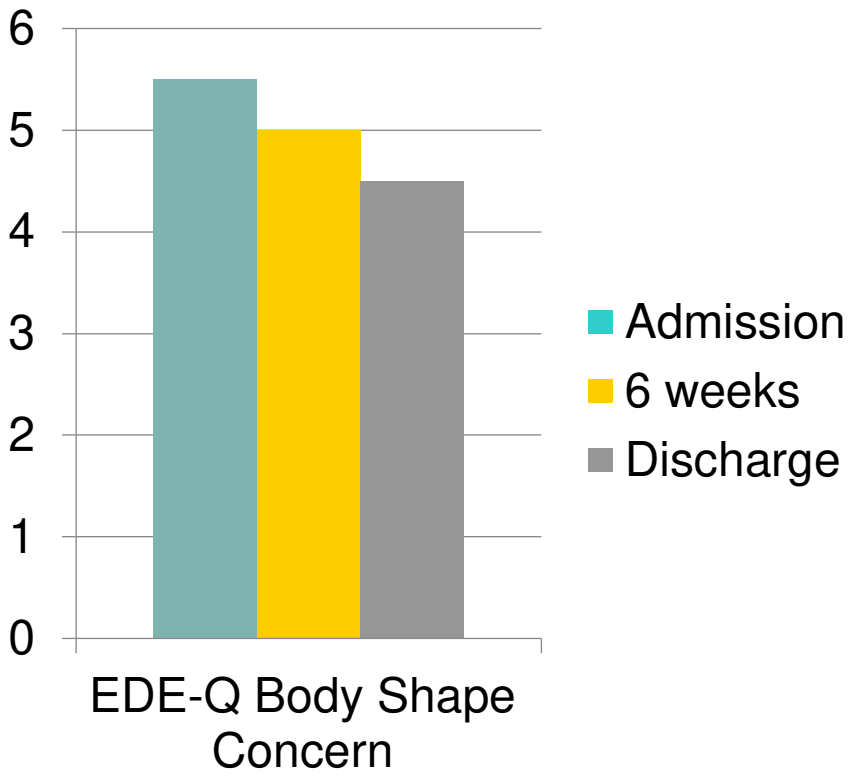
- **Body Embrace is designed specifically to address negative BI in severe EDs.**

Body Embrace Overview

- **The program builds on evidence-based techniques for BI in non-clinical samples and integrates cognitive, affective, sensory, and experiential interventions to more fully address the complex nature of BI distress in clinical populations.**
- **Body Embrace Phases**
  - **Assessment**
  - **Tolerance**
  - **Acceptance**
  - **Compassion**

Body Assessment Phase

- BI assessments are utilized to develop understanding of BI sx in role of ED.
  - EDE-Q Shape Concern Scale
  - EDI-3 Body Dissatisfaction Scale
- Administered at regular intervals to evaluate progress.



(Fairburn & Beglin, 2008; Garner & Lutz, 2004)

Body Tolerance Phase

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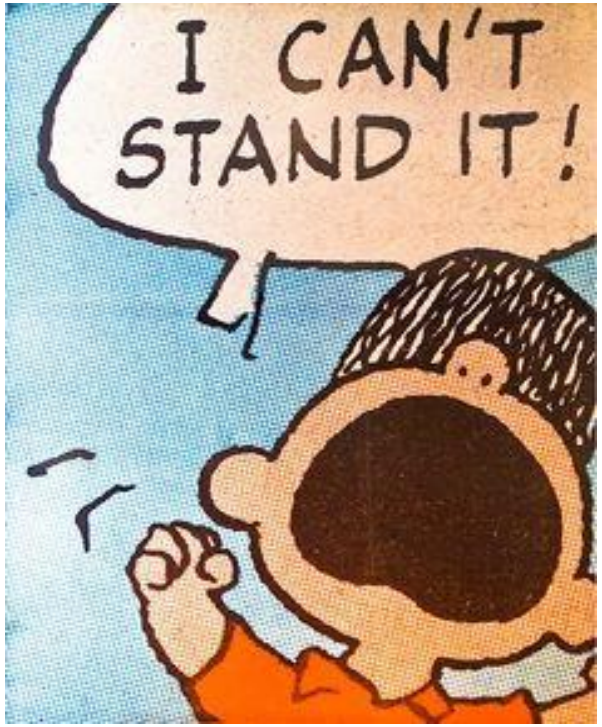
Definition: Learning to endure BI distress and dissatisfaction without acting on ED behaviors.

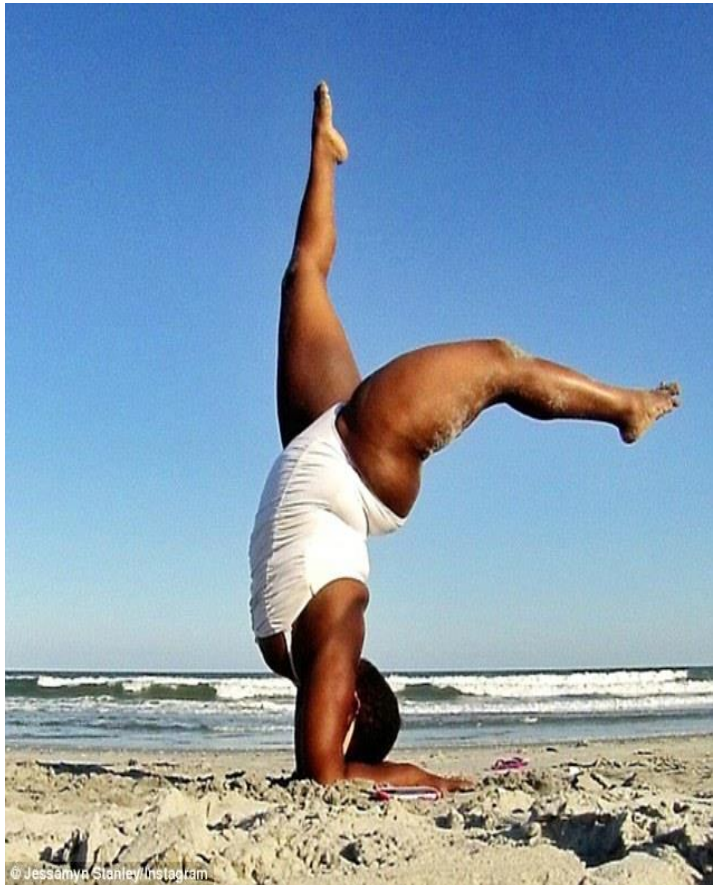


Body Tolerance Phase

- **Techniques include:**
  - **Distraction and Self-Soothing Techniques**
  - **Mindfulness Skills**
  - **Ban Book**
  - **Exposure Hierarchy for Body Avoidance**
  - **Urge Cards**
  - **Mirror Work with *Nonjudgmental Body Scan***
  - **Mindful Progressive Body Scan**

Body Acceptance Phase

Definition: Interacting with body in the moment, welcoming emotional experience, and approaching body with curiosity and without judgment.



Body Acceptance Phase

Techniques include:

- Body Image Timeline
- Body Exposure Imagery
- Mirror Work with a Gratitude Body Scan
- Body Gratitude Imagery
- Cognitive Defusion Skills
- Body Movement Exercises
- Body Integration Psychodrama

Body Compassion Phase

Definition: love, compassion and appreciation for the body.

Body Compassion Phase

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Techniques include:

- Affectionate Breathing
- Self-Compassion Body Scan Meditation
- Letters
- Felt-Sense Somatic Experiencing Exercise
- Mirror Work with Compassion Body Scan

Family Conversations about Body and Weight

- The way you talk about your own body and each others' bodies
- The way you talk about food and exercise
- Diet culture
- Weight Stigma

How to respond to your loved one about their weight

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- **Body changes are hard and real. Validate this.**
  - **Convincing your loved one to love their body is a losing battle**
  - **Convincing your loved one to see their body through your eyes…is a losing battle**
- **Remember that discussions around the body & weight have to do with other things:**
  - **Meaning Making: Shame, blame, coping, safety, punishment, control**
  - **See "weight" and "fat" as a signal that might signify something different/something deeper.**
- **Grief can be necessary when client's experience body change –or- a lack of body change.**
- **Each client will have a different "plan" regarding how they discuss weight and their bodies. This is specific to the client's desires and preferences.**