



Department of Psychiatry

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS



**BRAIN HEALTH** for all, for life.

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# The Influence of Media on Eating Disorders and OCD

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# Conflicts of Interests

- None to report



# Learning Objectives

- Participants will identify the impact of media on eating disorders and thin ideal internalization
- Participants will explain the role of compulsive social media use for OCD
- Participants will apply social media literacy to client sessions



# Eating Disorders

- Anorexia Nervosa (AN)
  - Restricting type
  - Binge-eating/purging type
- Bulimia Nervosa (BN)
- Binge Eating Disorder (BED)
- Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)
- Other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED)



APA, 2022

# Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



- **Obsessions**

- Recurrent persistent thoughts, urges, or images that are intrusive or unwanted, and caused marked anxiety or distress
- Attempts to ignore or suppress such thoughts, urger, or images or to neutralize them with some other action

- **Compulsions**

- Repetitive behaviors or mental acts that an individual feels drive not perform in response to an obsession or according to rules that must be applied rigidly
- The behavior or mental acts are aimed at preventing or reducing anxiety or distress, or preventing some dreaded event or situation; events or actions are not connected in a realistic way

- Obsessions and compulsions are time consuming (take more than 1 hour a day) or cause clinically significant distress or impairment



# ED and OCD

- **Similarities**
  - Rates of diagnoses: 11-69% of individuals with ED have OCD and 10-17% of individuals with OCD have ED
  - Intrusive thoughts/compulsive behaviors
    - Body image intrusive thoughts, obsessions with food, excessive or compulsive exercise, cycles with bingeing and purging, irrational fears of gaining weight, body checking behaviors
  - Perfectionism
  - All or none thinking
  - Rigidity
  - Attempts to gain control
  - Changes in weight due to obsessions/compulsions

# ED and OCD

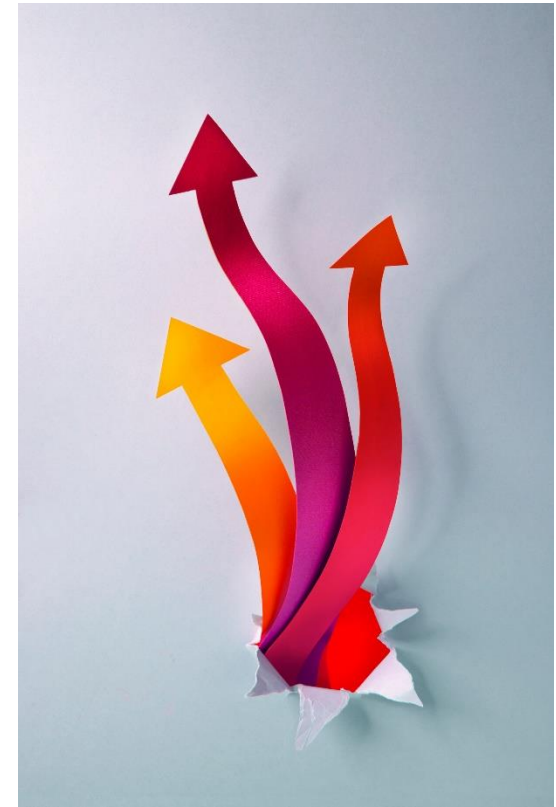
- **Differences**

- Ego syntonic vs ego dystonic
- OCD sufferers tend to be:
  - looking for a just right feeling
  - fear contamination/sickness with food
  - not eating due to time taken engaging in compulsions
  - have magical thinking with eating (i.e. I need to chew a certain amount or something bad will happen)
- Eating Disorder sufferers are motivated by concern for appearance, and EDBs are a result of this



# Social Comparison Theory

- **Upward Social Comparison**
  - Comparison to someone who is “better”
- **Downward Social Comparison**
  - Comparison to someone who is worse off
- **Lateral Social Comparison**
  - Comparing to someone who is about equal to ourselves



# Let's talk about the media



- Decline in the difference between Asia and West
  - Western Culture's attractiveness is communicated through media and influences attitudes toward one's own bodies
- **HOWEVER**, in a study of young Chinese women, there was more impact by physical depictions in Chinese/Asian mass media than Western media
- Tripartite influence model: media, parents, and peers on body image
- Gender differences in expectations

Frederick et al., 2017; Frieiro Padin et al, 2021; Jackson et al., 2016;  
Pritchard & Cramblitt, 2014; Santarossa & Woodruff, 2017; Swami, 2015

# Social Media

- The Positives
  - Meaningful social connections
  - Information sharing/helps raise awareness
  - It's fun



Dhir et al., 2018; Frieiro Padin et al, 2021; James et al., 2017; Pavelko & Myrick, 2015

# Social Media

- The not so positives
  - Isolation
  - Social Comparisons
  - Passive usage → not actually connecting with others
  - Social Media fatigue
  - Can be addictive
  - Invalidates/trivializes disorders
  - Misinformation



Dhir et al., 2018; Frieiro Padin et al, 2021; James et al., 2017; Pavelko & Myrick, 2015

# Thin Ideal

- **Thin Ideal**
  - The ideal body type (thinness/ultra thinness)
- **Thin Ideal Internalization**
  - The positive association of the idealized model in media
  - The desire to have the thin ideal
- **Media**
  - Frequently shows the thin ideal, leading to more comparisons
  - Individuals with thin ideal internalization strive to be the thin ideal, and often cannot leading to body dissatisfaction



# Media on Thin Ideal Internalization



- Exposure to social media can generate body dissatisfaction, with internalization of social pressure/standards of beauty of Western Cultures
- More exposure to thin-ideal may mean more body dissatisfaction
- Use of filters
- Likes/interaction on social media

# Media on Thin Ideal Internalization



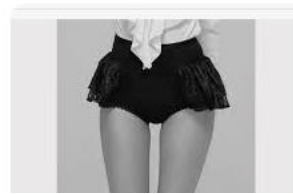
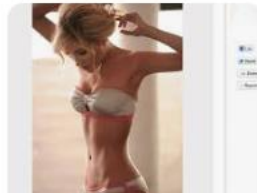
- Time spent on social media is linked to development of ED, with the increase in exposure of beauty references to compare oneself to
- More awareness of thin-ideal and pressure had higher body dissatisfaction
- HOWEVER...
  - Some studies show that there is minimal to no effect
  - Or there is an overestimation of the impact of media on OTHERS



Verywell Mind  
Thinspo: What It Is and How It Im...



PBS  
Fighting social media 'thinspir...



- Body
- Instagram
- Thin
- Pinterest
- Beautiful
- Weight loss
- Abs
- Beach
- Fitness



Harper's BAZAAR  
Tok's "Ironic" Thins...



The Guardian  
Waging war on web 'thinspiration' ...



Business Insider  
How the Fitspiration Move...



Personal Trainer  
THE UGLY SIDE OF #FITSP0 | Fit ...



The Sydney Morning Herald  
fitspo' trend co-opted body positivity ...



ELLE  
Honest Photos from Fitness Bloggers



Seventeen Magazine  
When #Fitspo Hurts More Than Helps



Head to  
fitspo - St



Pinterest  
fitspo ☆



Leggsington  
FITSP0 - WORK OUT W...



living minnaly  
The Ugly Side of #Fitspo - li...



Entrepreneur  
Have 'Fitspo' Influencers Saved the ...



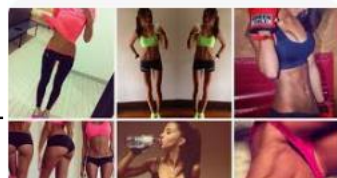
The Guardian  
strong became the new skinny ...



Instagram  
Inspiration #Fitspo #...

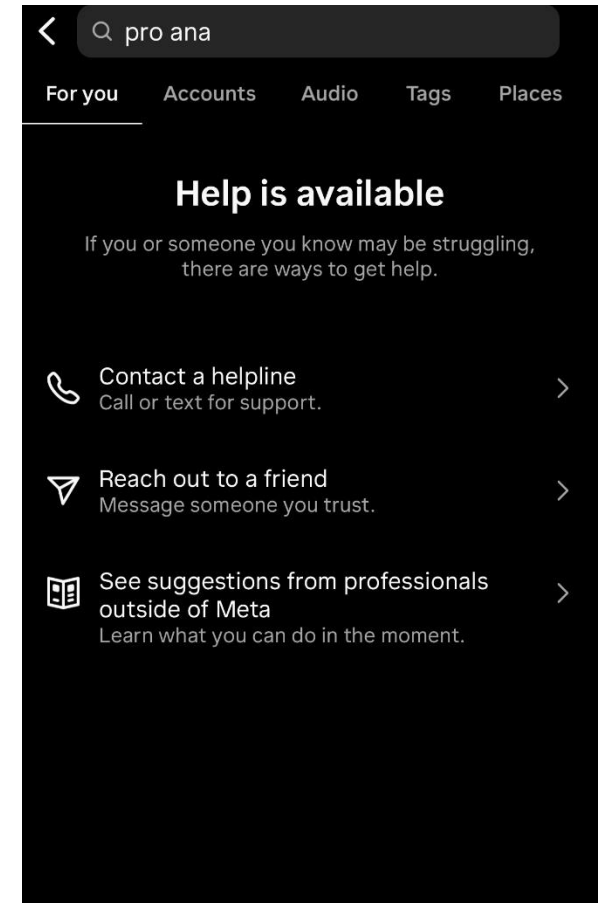


The Health Hun  
'The Fitspo' Lifestyl



# Eating Disorders and Social Media

- Pro-eating disorder social media accounts
  - Thinspiration
  - Fitspiration
  - Pro-ED
    - Early 2000s
  - Pro-Ana
    - Early 1990s
  - Pro-Mia
- Recovery accounts



# OCD and social media

- The positives:
  - Connection with support systems
  - Building of a community that may not be available
  - Maintain support systems
  - Meet others who have similar interests
- The not so positives:
  - Compulsive scrolling – being an area of focus for treatment
  - FOMO
  - Form of avoidance
  - Potentially a form of OCD: OSN OCD
  - Trivialization of the disorder



James et al., 2017; Pavelko & Myrick, 2015

# Mindful social media use

- Set guidelines for social media use
  - Limits on time spent on social media
  - Limits on types of interactions on social media
- Build awareness
  - Does it add or subtract from your life
  - What's the function
  - Check-in with who you're following
    - Use the mute or unfollow feature
- Build identity out of social media
  - Focus on identity work in treatment spaces
- Body acceptance/neutrality/functionality/positivity
- Awareness of TW/CW



# Telehealth

- Benefits
  - Ability to complete treatment (exposures) in the home
  - Insight into someone's living space and potentially their day to day
  - Seeing patients in rural spaces thus increasing access to treatment
- Barriers
  - Missing compulsions
  - Not having a full picture of what is going on for someone
  - Connection can feel “different”



# Resources

- **ED**

- International Association of Eating Disorder Professionals:  
<https://www.iaedp.com/>
- Eating Disorder Foundation: <https://www.eatingdisorderfoundation.org/>
- Eating Disorder Hope: <https://www.eatingdisorderhope.com/treatment-for-eating-disorders/eating-disorder-hotlines>
- National Eating Disorder Association:  
<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/>
- NEDIC: <https://nedic.ca/>
- National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders:  
<https://anad.org/>
- Eating Disorders Anonymous: <https://eatingdisordersanonymous.org/>

# Resources

- **OCD**

- International OCD Foundation: <https://iocdf.org/>
- Exposure and Response Prevention for OCD: <https://www.erp4ocd.com/graceland>
- Freedom from OCD: <https://www.laocdtreatment.com/download-book-resources-freedom-from-ocd>
- Stick with the Ick: <https://stickwiththeick.com/>
- OCD Stories: <https://theoecdstories.com/>



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# Thank you!

# Questions?

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