The Eating Issues and Body Image Continuum

This continuum represents the range of eating behaviors and attitudes toward food and body image. Most healthy people function in the two categories on the far left that reflect high self-esteem and healthy eating habits: "Concerned but not an issue." However, individuals can move from one category to another depending on changes that occur in their self-esteem and attitudes toward food and body image. An individual can be in one category for food and another for body image. Also, an individual can exhibit some, but not all, characteristics within a category.

FOOD IS NOT AN ISSUE

- I feel no guilt or shame no matter how much I eat or what I eat.
- Food is an important part of my life, but only occupies a reasonable part of my time.
- I trust my body to tell me what and how much to eat.

HEALTHY BUT CONCERNED

- I am moderate and flexible in goals for eating well.
- I enjoy eating for pleasure and balance that occurs for a healthy body.
- I try to follow nutrition guidelines and eat in a balanced way.

FOOD PREOCCUPIED/OBSESSED

- I have tried dieting, excluding certain foods, or counting calories to lose weight.
- I think about food a lot and regularly watch what I eat.
- I feel ashamed when I eat more than others or more than what I feel I should be eating.
- I wish I could change how much I want to eat and what I am hungry for.

DISORDERED EATING PATTERNS

- I have tried diet pills, supplements, laxatives, vomiting or exercise in order to lose or maintain my weight.
- I have fasted or avoided eating for long periods of time in order to lose or maintain my weight.
- I feel strong when I can restrict how much I eat.
- Eating more than I want to makes me feel out of control.

EATING DISORDERED

- I regularly restrict food or exercise, vomit, use diet pills, supplements or laxatives to get rid of the food or calories.
- My friends/family tell me they are concerned about my weight/appearance.
- I am terrified of eating fat.
- When I let myself eat, I have a hard time controlling the amount of food I eat.
- I am afraid to eat in front of others.

BODY OWNERSHIP

- I feel good about my body and what it can do.
- My body is beautiful to me.
- I believe that healthy and beautiful bodies come in all shapes and sizes.
- I know that the significant others in my life will always find me attractive.
- I trust my body to find the weight it needs to be at so I can move with confidence.

BODY ACCEPTANCE

- I love my body image equally on social norms and my own self-concept.
- I pay attention to my body and appearance because it is important, but it only occupies a small part of my day.
- I nurture my body so it has the strength and energy to achieve my physical goals.

BODY PREOCCUPIED/OBSESSED

- I spend a significant amount of time viewing my body in the mirror.
- I spend a significant amount of time comparing my body to others.
- I have many days when I feel fat.
- I'd be more attractive if I was thinner, more muscular, etc...

DISTURBED BODY IMAGE

- I don't see anything positive about my body shape and size.
- I believe that my body keeps me from dating or finding someone who will love me the way I am.
- I have considered changing or have changed my body shape and size through surgical means, so I cannot accept myself.

BODY HATE/DISASSOCIATION

- I hate my body and I often isolate myself from others.
- I don't believe others when they tell me I look OK.
- I hate the way I look in the mirror.

The Eating Issues and Body Image Continuum was adapted from an original provided by the University of Arizona Campus Health Services (Shelley/King/Avery, 1997).