

Perfectionism and eating disorders: A complex issue

January 21 2013

Two aspects of perfectionism are involved in body dissatisfaction and the development of eating disorders, according to a study of over a thousand women published this week in BioMed Central's open access journal, *Journal of Eating Disorders*. Adaptive perfectionism is high standards driving a person towards achieving a goal body image, and maladaptive perfectionism is concerned with mistakes and other people's opinions.

The finding indicates that both are involved in heightened concerns about [body image](#), which in turn places people at risk of developing an eating disorder.

Over a thousand women representing a cross section of the population (aged 28-40) were involved in this study. They ranged from underweight to morbidly obese, with a BMI of 14 to 64, and overall, the further these women were away from a healthy BMI, the bigger the difference between their current and ideal body images.

While perfectionism is recognised as an important factor in eating disorders, the exact role of perfectionism in perceived body image has been difficult to pin down. Tracey Wade and Marika Tiggemann, from Flinders University, found that women who desired the lowest BMI and the smallest body size tended to be more concerned about making mistakes, and more worried about organisation and higher self doubt than everyone else.

Prof Tracey Wade explained, "While some perfectionism is normal and necessary there becomes a point at which it becomes and unhelpful and [vicious cycle](#). Knowing that [perfectionism](#) of any sort is a risk factor for eating disorders suggests we should tackle 'all or nothing' attitudes with clients, as well as helping them to become less invested in defining their self worth in terms of their ability to achieve high standards."

Open access publisher [BioMed Central](#) is proud to announce the launch of the *Journal of Eating Disorders*. This journal launch marks a significant development in this area of research; as it is the first open access journal of its kind. *Journal of Eating Disorders* is co-edited by Prof Phillipa Hay, University of Western Sydney and Prof Stephen Touyz, University of Sydney.

More information: The role of perfectionism in body dissatisfaction Tracey D Wade, Marika Tiggemann, *Journal of Eating Disorders* (in press)

Provided by BioMed Central

Citation: Perfectionism and eating disorders: A complex issue (2013, January 21) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

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