

The role of sexuality in eating disorders

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A new study published in the current issue of *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* explores the role of sexuality in the long-term outcome of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. As with other psychiatric disorders, anorexia nervosa (AN) and bulimia nervosa (BN) are often comorbid with sexual dysfunctions. Different studies suggest that a relevant percentage of persons with EDs continue to display ED psychopathology for protracted periods of time.

This study aimed to evaluate whether [sexual functioning](#) may represent a predictor of response to CBT and a potential indicator of the recovery process in patients with AN and BN.

Results confirmed that after a psychological intervention focused on the common core psychopathological features of EDs, patients with AN and BN showed similar changes in several domains of sexual functioning. Moreover, the improvement of sexual functioning was associated with a reduction of some specific psychopathological features of EDs, such as body uneasiness. On the other hand, weight restoration and binge-eating reduction appeared to be not directly correlated with these outcomes. In other words, some patients with AN restored to a normal weight but still showed an impaired sexuality, and some patients with BN interrupted binge eating but still reported sexual dysfunctions.

These observations confirmed those of previous studies describing a specific relationship between ED psychopathology and sexual dysfunction and partly contradict the hypothesis that [sexual dysfunction](#) in AN is exclusively due to weight loss and secondary hypogonadism.

More information: Giovanni Castellini et al. Role of Sexuality in the Outcome of Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa: A 3-Year Follow-Up Study, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* (2017). [DOI: 10.1159/000477176](https://doi.org/10.1159/000477176)

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