Disordered Eating/Eating Disorders (ED) on College Campuses

- Estimated ED prevalence of 12-30% among college students
- Median age of ED onset at 18-21 years
- Over half of female and a third of male adults report dieting for weight loss
- Around a third of college students report using compensatory weight control behaviors
- 40% of college students report binge eating
- Only 10% of EDs are diagnosed and treated among college students

Background

Disordered Eating/ED at SPU

- 80% of nutritional support clients on disordered eating/ED spectrum, with 10% clinical
- Common symptoms: extreme caloric restriction, high obsession with having thin body, chronic dieting, possibly with purging
- Often female, white, health-related majors, classified as normal-overweight
- 80% of nutritional support clients on disordered eating/ED spectrum, with 10% clinical
- Associated with higher self-worth and self-esteem, increased purging

DISUED Prevention on College Campuses

Promotion of positive body image & advocacy against weight stigma

- Associated with higher self-worth and self-esteem, increased self-care behaviors, increased physical activity, decreased dieting, greater intuitive eating, decreased depression
- National Eating Disorder Awareness (NEDAwareness) Week programming on 465 college campuses to raise awareness
- NEDAwareness Week on some campuses reported to increase awareness and knowledge of resources, improve body image satisfaction, increase help-seeking intentions

SPU Body Positive Week

NEDAwareness Week at SPU held annually as Body Positive Week

- Goal: explore body image, debunk myths about health and weight, promote self-care, raise awareness, spread body positivity
- Tent in central location with activities and informational posters and handouts
- Topics included normal/disordered eating spectrum, ED resources, orthorexia, weight myths, intuitive eating, and self-care
- Distributed marketing materials with body positive messages
- Film screening of Embrace followed by Q&A session with guest panel

Featured Activities

- Instagram Booth- promote body diversity in social media
- Body Image Tree- post responses to prompts about body image to create a collective “body image story” corresponding to parts of a tree
- A Letter to My Future Self- write a self-addressed body positive card to be mailed at the end of the school year
- Button Up: Body Positivity- create custom body positive buttons
- Mindful Eating- a guided exercise in eating a small candy/snack

Discussion

Body Positive Week Outcomes

- 90% of participants reported highly enjoying each of the activities
- 98-100% of participants rated the posters/handouts somewhat to highly valuable
- Participant takeaway messages consistent with project goals, reflecting self-love, body appreciation, and ED awareness

Conclusions & Recommendations

- Increase inclusivity, particularly of males
- Include educational material to help students determine when to seek help for eating concern/disordered eating symptoms

References

1. Luedicke M, Swanson KR. Taking advantage of the advantages for students with high levels of eating concern. Eat Behav. 2017;24(1):191-198
15. Penick KC, Altabe M, Balaban MS. Campus programming for National Eating Disorders Awareness Week: Effectiveness of a one-time psychoeducational programming for students with high levels of eating concern. Eat Behav. 2015;16:51-58. doi:10.1016/j.eatbeh.2015.07.009