

Let's Taco About It: A message to Millennials

Everyone seems to talk about eating disorders without actually *talking* about eating disorders. Everyone seems to know about eating disorders, or sadly know someone with an eating disorder, but no one really seems willing to learn about eating disorders or why it is suddenly common to have one. The eating disorder phenomenon has got to stop. Eating disorder statistics provided by the National Eating Disorder Association indicate that 10 million American women and one million American men suffer from eating disorders. This disease has the highest mortality rate of any mental illness but no one seems to be aware of that. The media culture and attitude strongly attribute to this rapidly growing disease and it seems to me that no one really cares. So let's care for a second.

The current media culture is overwhelming and damaging. Everywhere we turn we are surrounded by the most beautiful people staring at us from a magazine, our Instagram feed, a billboard, or TV screen. The American media culture is a constant reminder to woman of what they are "supposed" look like. Every time we open our phones, or turn on a good show, we are reminded what the image of "beautiful" is supposed to be, and how that is not us. As we get older and older, the standard of "skinny" becomes smaller and smaller. Every model and actress is just skin and bones, other than their unexplainably perfect boobs and butt. Stores like Brandy Melville sell clothing in one size, the tag says "one size fits most" but I guarantee the sorry excuse of a shirt fits basically no one; stores like these set girls up for confidence failure. Also, as children, we are given stunning dolls and then hope to grow up to look like them. Although it is highly unlikely for a rail thin woman to have natural DD-cup size breasts, toy manufacturers set this expectation by developing and marketing the Barbie doll, whose measurements are physiologically impossible. With media pressure to be unrealistically thin and a multibillion dollar dieting industry at our disposal, higher rates of eating disorders in the population seem concerning, but are also understandable. While cultural standards of beauty are certainly not new, today's media is far more present and powerful.

So, let's talk about the effects of this overwhelming phenomenon. Seventy-seven percent of individuals with eating disorders report that the illness can last anywhere from one to 15 years or even longer in some cases. It is estimated that approximately six percent of serious cases die. For many others, there are long-term, irreversible consequences which can affect one's physical and emotional health. More importantly, only 50% all people with this devastating disease report being permanently cured. These facts are thrown at children in health classes, but that doesn't really make an impression on girls who want to be "skinny", I know it didn't on me. Your health teacher fails to mention that at the age of 15 you could be told by a doctor that because of this disorder, you probably will never be a mother because you diminished your eggs. Your health teacher does not mention that your illness will haunt you everyday as you try to hide it from the same exact society that forced you into it. And your health teacher certainly doesn't mention that although your eating disorder might solve your one problem of feeling too fat, it creates hundreds more for a lifetime. And lastly, your health teacher doesn't mention that you will never feel the same after (hopefully) overcoming an eating disorder. You

will never fully forgive yourself for giving into this overwhelming society, giving up part of yourself to be just like the rest.

It is clear that the modern day culture is having traumatizing affects on our generation and it is up to us to change it. We need to educate the world and our children on the devastating effects of media in our lives. We need to stop body-shaming perfectly beautiful and healthy children and we need to be the better people in this world because if we don't change our culture, who will.

Source:

Mirasol Eating Disorder Recovery Centers . (n.d.). Retrieved October 29, 2017, from <https://www.mirasol.net/learning-center/eating-disorder-statistics.php>