

# Anorexia, a desperate cry for love

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Read the text and complete the sentences on the next page.

Even though anorexia is a condition which has been known for a long time, it was officially recognized and identified as a pathological condition only at the end of the twentieth century.

A growing **concern** towards this disease has been shown in the last few years, partly due to its connection to thinness, which has become a real **value-loaded** symbol of our modern society.

It is quite shocking to realize that the symptoms of this disease develop at very young ages (between 10 and 12) but more surprising is the fact that cases occur up to older ages (35-40) more and more frequently, which did not happen in the past.

The most evident among these symptoms are:

- a 25% loss in body weight;
- a body mass rate less than 17.5 (the average for women is between 21 and 25);
- absence of menstrual cycle.

As far as the causes of anorexia are concerned, they are often to be related to social and affective problems. Most young people suffering from it have difficulties in accepting themselves as they are and they tend to consider extreme **thinness** as a sort of ideal aesthetic rule to be **pursued**.

A heavy responsibility for this has to be placed on the media, too. They often show social models which adolescents **struggle** to compare or identify with: top models, actresses, **trendy** sportswomen, glamorous singers. The ideal image of a **slender** body **catches on** young people so much because of the crucial time in their development, when they are trying to establish and assert their personal identity to the world outside.



Anorexic adolescents often desire food, they are sometimes really hungry, but they decide to stop eating to gain 'affective visibility' to their families or more generally to the people around them. At more serious stages of the disease they not only **reject** food but even any kind of social relationship.

Intervention strategies can vary according to the patient and her family background. If anorexia is due to a past trauma (often sexual abuse), **counselling** is aimed to a gradual process of acceptance of one's own body. When the causes are to be found in a difficult family context (mother to daughter relationship, oppressive parents), family therapy is the best solution.

Anyway, the most effective approach to the problem requires cooperation: psychotherapy, group counselling, help from parents and friends, together with a progressive eating re-education.

## GLOSSARY



**to catch on:** *avere successo*

**concern:** *preoccupazione*

**counselling:** *assistenza, consulenza*

**to pursue:** *perseguire*

**to reject:** *rifiutare*

**to slender:** *snello*

**struggle:** *lottare*

**thinness:** *magrezza*

**trendy:** *di moda*

**value-loaded:** *carico di valori*

- a. Anorexia was officially recognized as a pathological condition .....
- b. Nowadays it is often in relation to ..... which our society ..... as a symbol.
- c. Cases of anorexic women in their thirties are ..... today, but they ..... in the past.
- d. A weight loss of 15% ..... be considered a symptom of anorexia.
- e. The media ..... responsible for ..... young people with models they try to ..... with.
- f. Anorexia affects young people when they are ..... to affirm their personal .....
- g. Anorexic young girls reject ..... and even .....
- h. One of the causes has often to be found in a ..... abuse.
- i. It is sometimes necessary to intervene on ..... family .....
- j. Apart from psychological counselling, a progressive ..... is necessary.

