

A Dissertation

Entitled

The Benefits of Counseling Psychology on Anorexia Nervosa Sufferers

By Alfred Biggen

Research in Counseling Psychology

Abstract

About 14 million women all over USA are currently fighting with anorexia nervosa (AN). This disorder is often considered as among “the most intractable and least understood mental illness” (Sanderson and Sellman, 2005, p. 138). Most of the victims of this illness will be fighting with this disease for the rest of their entire lives. On the other hand, if this illness is diagnosed at an earlier time, during teenage years for instance, it is highly possible to treat it using the right treatment method. Thus, women who are struggling with anorexia nervosa also need comprehensive treatment. These days, after about forty years of study and research, there has been an improvement on the treatment options that range from counseling to medication.

Chapter One

Introduction

Upon recognizing the symptoms of Anorexia Nervosa, which often includes weight loss, strict dieting, binge eating and fasting, depression and weakness, members of the family should already start seeking out the counseling of a health care provider, starting with the assistance of a psychologist. The psychologist will start with taking a medical history, alongside a physical examination (Camer, 2003). After completing the process, the physician can start the treatment for Anorexia Nervosa, which may also include certain referrals to a good psychologist for counseling, as well as other medical fields.

Counseling

One of the standard types of treatment come in the form of counseling, often referred to as psychotherapy. The aim of this process is to work together with patients so that through this process, she can control her diet and maintain her weight eventually. There are two types of counseling available: individual and family therapy.

Individual Therapy

This type of therapy involves one on one counseling with the patient. At times, there is a group of specialists. However, the

Research in Counseling Psychology

session often happen between the doctor and the patient. Individual therapy often comes with mixed results. As explained by an article found in the Journal of Adolescent Psychiatry (2001), this type of therapy is generally superior especially when they are used in providing treatment for older patients, as well as those who are suffering from a late-onset of Anorexia Nervosa.

Family Therapy

While the fact remains that individual therapy may not be effective on young adolescents, as well as those who are still on the early phase of Anorexia Nervosa, family therapy is often considered as significant when it comes to helping this particular group. As a matter of fact, according to the Psychiatry Journal of Canada, "without the family's involvement serving as allies, the goal of weight maintenance may be challenging to achieve" (Stevenson and Katzmen, 2002). At the same time, family therapy may not just avail of the assistance of the patients, as well as other members of the family, but it can also work together with friends and the school, as part of the strategy.

Nutritional Therapy

While both individual, as well as family therapy are more of the traditional methods in providing treatment to Anorexia Nervosa, nutritional therapy, which often referred to as psychoeducational therapy, can also be used commonly. The goal of this type of therapy involves providing counseling on the nature of the illness with the hope of cultivating both attitudinal and behavioral changes on the patient.

References

Camer, P. A. (2003). Anorexia Nervosa. Reference on Clinical Systems, 2003, 109.

Sanderson, M.A., & Sellman, B.W (2005). Eating disorders among children and adolescents: therapies available. Child & Adults Psychiatry, 11, 110-118.