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DISORDERS

Continued from Page 1

Cheryl remembers feeling like an alcoholic during her binging periods.

"I always started the day feeling so bad that I told myself I wasn't going to do it again and then I'd go right ahead and do the same thing," she said.

Growing up in a family which she describes as "food oriented," Cheryl said her family used food for everything from celebrating to comforting someone when they were upset.

"My family showed love with food," Cheryl said. "I wasn't taught what to do with feelings, so I ended up eating over them. ... I didn't know you could have feelings and express them."

Eating disorders can usually be traced to some life transition often occurring in childhood like the parents divorce, death, chronic illness or money concerns, said Rubel. Eating disorders are one way people have developed to cope with the crisis, she said.

The issues (for people with different eating disorders) are all very similar — power, control, comfort, safety," Rubel said.

"When people trust us enough to tell us about their eating disorder," Rubel said, "they usually also tell us they're lonely. She said women tell her that food is their best friend; it's always there to turn to; it gives them comfort and is never farther away than the nearest 7-Eleven store."

Rubel uses an iceberg as an analogy to explain all the different factors that support eating disorders. The tip of the iceberg is the eating, or dieting behavior, but the majority of the iceberg lies underneath. Biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors help create the unhealthy behavior; heredity and relationships may also contribute.

While the mix of factors is different in different people, the cultural factor is usually present to some degree in most women.

"We live in a culture that glorifies thinness," Rubel said. "When I was growing up, we all wanted to look like Marilyn Monroe and Ava Gardner. They would be considered fat today. Thirty to 40 years later, society has shifted the image of women from soft, voluptuous and gentle to muscular, hard and thin."

Rubel said when women feel bad about themselves, they go to the television or magazines which tell them "thin will make you better."

Rubel said 50 percent of all fourth grade girls in this country are on a diet because they think they are too fat.

Chronic dieting is one result of our culture's emphasis on thinness. "Chronic dieting is such a way of life for so many people ... it's a way to give meaning to life," Rubel said. One of Rubel's patients told her that she had thought if she were thinner, she'd have worth or be a good person.

Sara said that she liked being obese in one sense because she felt big and strong. She said

she was rebelling against the idea that in order to be valuable, she had to be little.

While eating disorders have been thought of as a women's problem, they are becoming more common among men, especially in the gay community where men are valued for their appearance just as women are, Rubel said.

Male athletes who have to be at a certain weight to compete in their sport are also vulnerable to eating disorders, said Murphy.

Sports like wrestling, crew and activities like dance all emphasize body size and weight as do fraternities and sororities, Murphy said.

Rubel estimates that five to 10 percent of American men have eating disorders. Although men occasionally attend her free Wednesday night information session on eating disorder, none have ever attended the hospital's eating disorders program.

"They're just so terrified. They can't seem to get past their feelings of shame and embarrassment," Rubel said.

Recovery is possible, Rubel said. She defines recovery by signs such as: being at a normal weight, no bingeing, no laxative abuse, no excessive exercising, weighing only once a year at the doctor's office, feeling reasonably comfortable with your body, three meals a day, a snack if necessary, not being ritualistic about what you eat.

Rubel checks up on former program participants and claims that two years after Sacred Heart's 20-week group, 80 percent of the women are fully recovered or to a point where they'll keep on going. Of the remaining 20 percent, she said either their parents dragged them in or they did it to please someone else.

Some of the 20 percent who don't recover will eventually come back into treatment and do pretty well, Rubel said. Research done at other places indicates that some will stay somewhat impaired, able to live life and function, but still be obsessed with diet, weight and food. The rest will stay chronic. "Those are the sad ones," Rubel said.

Both Sara and Arlene found help in Overeaters Anonymous, a nonprofit group modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous.

Sara, now at normal weight said it's still hard for her to be objective about how she looks.

"I get a more accurate perspective of what I look like from photographs," she said. "I look at them very hard and just trust. The fact that I wear really small clothes tells me that I'm not obese."

Sara attributes the changes in her life to the support of Overeaters Anonymous and the Higher Power that is the basis of the Anonymous programs.

The University Counseling center also has a support group for eating disorders called "Stop the weighting game." Murphy said the group doesn't emphasize weight, but looks at feelings, thoughts and behavior.

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Back To The Future III (PG)
11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40, 12:10 In Stereo

Cinema Paradiso (R)
7:15, 9:45, 12:15 In Stereo

Arachnophobia (PG-13)
11:35, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30, 12:00 Trk

Arachnophobia (PG-13)
11:50, 2:20, 4:50, 7:20, 9:50, 12:20 Trk

Bird On A Wire (PG-13)
11:45, 2:05, 4:30, 7:00, 9:25, 11:50 In Stereo

The Jetsons (G)
1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:20, 9:20, 11:20 In Stereo

Betsy's Wedding (R)
12:45, 2:55, 5:00, 7:05, 9:25, 11:35 In Stereo

Quick Change (R)
1:35, 3:35, 5:35, 7:35, 9:35, 11:35 In Stereo

Navy Seals (R)
11:35, 2:05, 4:35, 7:05, 9:30, 11:55 In Stereo

Ghost Dad (PG)
1:05, 3:05, 5:05, 7:05, 9:05, 11:05 In Stereo

The Jungle Book (G)
1:15, 3:15, 5:15, 7:15, 9:15, 11:15 In Stereo

Dick Tracy (PG)
11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30, 12:00 In Stereo

Milo & Otis (G)
1:05, 3:05, 5:15 In Stereo

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