

Recovery!

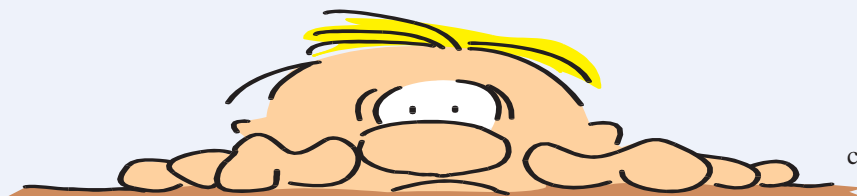
Sometimes, when people feel overwhelmed with emotion, and aren't quite sure how to deal with their feelings effectively, they resort to injuring themselves as a method of sustaining their life and coping with difficult emotions. Why would anyone want to inflict pain upon themselves in this manner? Known as self-inflicted violence, self-harm or self-mutilation, this is the act of physically harming one's body on purpose without the intention of suicide. The injury, which can take the form of cutting, biting, scratching, head banging, burning, picking at wounds, bone breaking, and on a less severe level, excessive nail biting and hair pulling, is inflicted by individuals on themselves.

Give voice to your suffering.

END SELF-INFLICTED VIOLENCE.

Self-inflicted violence is an attempt at taking control, not a failed suicide attempt. An estimated 2 million Americans engage in self-inflicted violence, 30 times more than the rate of attempted suicide, and 140 times the rate of actual suicides. Cutting, punching, or whatever the form of self-violence, helps some people feel better by means of expressing their bottled up emotions and releasing their built up internal tensions. For some, it produces chemical changes in the body, releasing endorphins which make them feel temporarily happier. Inflicting violence to one's body is used primarily to relieve tension making the person feel better. It is done to yourself - not to others. It is done by yourself - not by someone else. It is not an attempt at suicide. It is intentionally harming oneself in a desperate attempt to heal internal pain.

Alterations of appearance, such as getting a tattoo, are not a form of self-inflicted violence. Tattoos, body piercings and plastic surgery are ways to improve one's physical appearance. These are things that other people do to you and you intend for others to see. If a person was to use tattooing as a form of self-inflicted violence, they might well end up covered in tattoos. Ritual mutilation is also not a form of self-inflicted violence as it is done in order to conform to a societal group. Self-inflicted violence is done by yourself and is usually hidden from others as it is seen as a shameful act.



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Greetings!

Everyone experiences some sort of stress at some point of time in their life, and everyone has a different method of coping. Some people communicate their feelings with others, some people relieve tension by exercising, others use relaxation techniques. Unfortunately, some people turn to eating disorders or self-inflicted violence. We've included an article on self-inflicted violence as many girls with eating disorders also self-injure. You will find some suggestions on how to end self-inflicted violence, which can also be helpful for dealing with an eating disorder.

Is beauty really in the eye of the beholder? Christy, the newest addition to the Westwind staff, recently completed a study on attractiveness. We thought this article might be of interest to many of our readers.

Well, summer has finally arrived and it looks like we have many warm days ahead of us. We hope you all find time to yourself to relax and enjoy the sunshine. Don't forget to register for our golf tournament, no golf skills required, and for the Westwind Reunion. We hope to see you all there!

Lynne Robertson

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The nicest and sweetest days are not those on which anything very splendid or wonderful or exciting happens, but just those that bring simple little pleasures, following one another softly like pearls slipping off a string.

Lucy Maud Montgomery

This newsletter is a publication of the Westwind eating disorder recovery centre, and is intended for general information only. It is not intended to provide personal medical or psychological advice, which should be obtained from a qualified health professional.

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More information about Westwind can be obtained by calling 204-728-2499, or call toll free in North America at 1-888-353-3372. Check our web site at : <http://westwind.mb.ca>, or e-mail us at westwindedrc@mb.sympatico.ca. We are located at 458-14th St, Brandon, MB, R7A 4T3, Canada.

The development of self-inflicted violence is difficult to determine, much like that of an eating disorder. Most people who engage in self-inflicted violence cannot recall the first time they injured themselves, or why it occurred. People use self-inflicted violence as a way of relieving overwhelming feelings. Their emotions become bottled up inside and they see cutting, or whatever the form of injury they choose, as the only way of expressing these feelings. It becomes a method of managing stress in life. It can be used as a way of physically expressing internal pain, providing evidence that the person is suffering psychologically. Some people may self-injure because they become addicted to the euphoric feeling with the release of endorphins following an episode of self-harm. It can be used as a form of self-punishment for acts that the person regards as shameful, and also as a form of self-nurturing in which the person fulfills their desire to be loved by tending to their wounds after injuring themselves. It can take the form of re-enacting previous abuse experienced in childhood. It may even be a learned behaviour that is picked up from observing others coping with their emotions in this manner. No two cases of self-injury are alike. Each person has his/her own reasons, events leading up to and method of inflicting violence upon themselves. Men and women both self-injure with the onset occurring during the time of adolescence. Sixty percent of cases occur between the ages of 16 and 25 years old. Adolescence is a time of change creating stress that people find difficult to handle. Some turn to self-inflicted violence as a method of coping.

Similar to eating disorders, self-inflicted violence follows some form of ritualistic pattern. Environment, instrument and procedure are often similar during the

events of each person's individual episode of self-injury. The cycle of self-inflicted violence involves thoughts and feelings that lead up to the event. Each episode follows a similar pattern; negative emotions create tension, which leads to dissociation, which causes the act of self-inflicted violence, resulting in positive effects, which wear off into negative effects, that lead back to more negative emotions. It is a cycle that the individual uses to handle negative feelings and thoughts in their life, which eventually becomes a behavioural pattern that is a habit difficult to be broken.

It has been shown that most women who engage in some form of self-inflicted violence also have some form of eating disorder. There are several similarities between the two. Both are commonly brought on by some sort of trauma in the person's life. They are used as a coping mechanism and a way of gaining a need for control. During an episode of self-injury, or during an episode of binge eating and purging, the individual has a tendency to dissociate from their feelings. Both involve a great deal of internal pain in which the individual turns to their self-violence or eating disorder to relieve tension and express to others the amount of psychological pain they are experiencing.

Though self-inflicted violence, like an eating disorder, develops to serve a function in a person's life, it is very damaging to the body. Effort should be made to end self-inflicted violence in order to reduce issues such as shame, guilt, embarrassment and secrecy, in turn enhancing the quality of life. Self-inflicted violence cannot be used to deal with every stressful situation faced with. Problem solving skills need to be developed in order to deal with future struggles in a more

appropriate manner, improving physical and psychological health.

If you engage in some form of self-inflicted violence there are some steps you can begin to take to disrupt the behaviour.

1. **Share your feelings.** Confide in a trusted friend, parent or counsellor what your feelings are, what you think triggered the feelings and the physical sensations you are experiencing. If you do not feel comfortable talking to someone yet, try journaling.

2. **Distract yourself.** Find an activity that distracts you from self-harming, like contacting someone, getting out of the house, or using relaxation techniques. This will help get your mind off of using self harm or at least delay the episode.

3. **Substitute the self-harm.** Try squeezing ice as a substitute for self-harming yourself or exercise to relieve the tension you are feeling. Focus on replacing your negative feelings with positive ones by practicing positive self-talk and journaling.

4. **Recognize and avoid triggers.** Keep track of the events, thoughts and feelings that lead up to an episode of self-harm, enabling you to identify the triggers and prevent self-harm in the future.

5. **Caring for yourself.** Make sure that you eat well, get enough rest and care for your basic physical needs. Take care of yourself when you are ill, and let loved ones in your life take care of you when you need it. Doing so will help you re-connect with your body and help you become more aware of your feelings.

6. **Set limits for yourself.** Place some boundaries around your self-harming behaviour, including making certain places, times and actions out of bounds for self-harming. Also, get rid of the items you use to self-harm.

Relapse is common when we are making changes in our behaviours, whether we are recovering from self-harming, an eating disorder, or even trying to quit smoking. Events of relapse during recovery are normal, don't feel that you have done something wrong. Look at the relapse as a bump in the road to recovery, examine what might have caused the event to learn what to do to prevent relapses in the future.

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Strong, M. (1999) *A Bright Red Scream*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

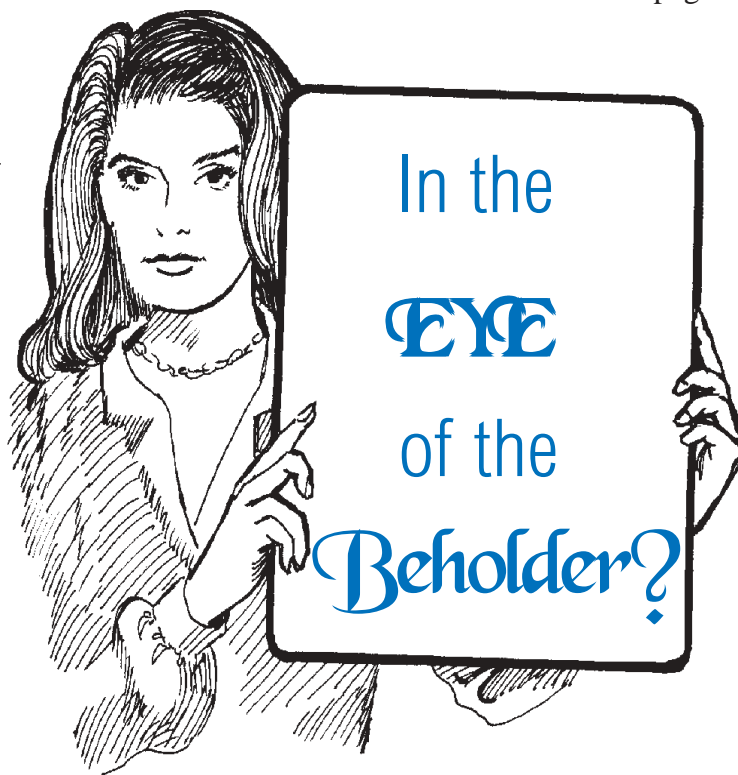
NEW PAYMENT OPTIONS!

Westwind is pleased to
announce that we now
accept payment by:

Visa Mastercard
cheque Interac



There is a common saying that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” This statement suggests that different individuals have differing standards of beauty. This statement would lead one to believe that different people would disagree about what physical traits are, and are not, attractive. Further, this suggests that people should assign quite distinct ratings of attractiveness to the same person. However, psychological research actually provides evidence to the contrary, people tend to agree about what physical traits are, and are not, attractive. Among individuals there is a consensus about standards of attractiveness. Even so, you might expect that different cultures



would have very distinct standards of beauty. This is not the case. Surprisingly, different cultures even have similar standards for what is considered to be attractive. The fact that even different cultures share the same standards for beauty suggests that there may be a biological rather than a cultural explanation for these consistent standards of beauty.

Psychologists have attempted to explain these results of similar beauty standards using evolutionary theory. Evolutionary theories propose that there are consistent beauty standards because attractiveness is an indication of gene quality. In other words, this theory suggests that attractive individuals have good genes, better health, and are good mating partners. Some research supports this theoretical explanation, while other research does not. Therefore, it is unknown whether or not this theory is accurate. Nevertheless, beauty is not in the eye of the beholder. People tend to agree about what is, and is not, attractive, even across cultures.

You might be wondering why it is important not to talk about attractiveness? Well, other people tend to make assumptions about attractive individuals. Even when a person knows an individual well, he/she makes assumptions about that person based on their level of attractiveness. People tend to ascribe positive qualities to attractive individuals. This phenomenon is referred to as the “beautiful is good” stereotype. Attractive people are judged by others to have greater occupational competence, more social appeal, and more interpersonal competence. Others also assume that more attractive individuals are more intelligent. Attractive individuals are expected to obtain better jobs, have happier marriages, and lead more fulfilling lives than unattractive people. Attractive individuals receive more attention and cooperation from others. Therefore, they tend to be treated better by others. Overall, individuals

attribute many positive qualities to attractive individuals. However, we are left to wonder, are attractive individuals different than unattractive individuals in any way?

Attractive people do differ from unattractive individuals in some important ways. In general, attractive individuals experience greater occupational success, are more popular, have more dating experience and more sexual experience, are in better physical and mental health, are more extroverted, and have better social skills. Not surprisingly, individuals that think they are attractive have better self-esteem. Finally, more attractive people tend to have better body-esteem. This is quite a long list of differences, but are these individuals actually different in these ways, or are these differences the result of differential treatment that attractive individuals receive throughout their lifetime? This is a question that cannot be answered, but it is a question to think about. The way an individual is treated by others greatly influences how that person feels about him/herself and as a result, how confident that person is in his/her own abilities. The next time you see an attractive or unattractive person think about what assumptions you are making about that person and what effect those assumptions could have on that person.

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What's New at Westwind?

Westwind Reunion

The second annual Westwind reunion for all of our past and present clients has been planned for August 9th through 11th here at Westwind. Join us in sharing memories and fun with all of the great people you met at Westwind. To register for the reunion please call 204-728-2499.

Golf Tournament

The Westwind Foundation will be holding a fundraising golf tournament on Saturday August 10, 2002, in conjunction with The Westwind Reunion. We invite everyone to attend this fun best ball tournament to support the treatment, education, awareness and prevention of eating disorders. To register for the golf tournament, or to make a donation, please contact The Westwind Foundation at 204-728-2499.

Support Groups

Support groups for individuals, family and friends whose lives are affected by eating disorders are held every Wednesday evening at 7pm at Westwind.

On-Line Support Group

Join our on-line eating disorder support group community. Start a discussion, chat with other Westwind clients or post your favorite pictures. Sign into the community at <http://communities.msn.com/westwindeatingdisordersupportgroup>.



Good nutrition is the consumption of foods which will provide the nutrient needs of the body for optimal health. Nutrients are chemical substances in foods that nourish the body by providing energy, building materials and factors to regulate chemical reactions. The body needs over fifty different nutrients daily in order to function properly, without them deficiencies of varying degrees can occur which can compromise health in the long run.

When we are poorly nourished our immune system may not be able to fight off all the dangerous environmental elements. Major diseases, such as cancer, hypertension, diabetes and heart disease are thought to be closely related to a lack of protective factors and nutrients which are found in foods. These protective factors help the body fend off damaging effects of carcinogens, imbalance of nutrients and free radicals.

There are 7 major classes of nutrients that we need to be aware of:

- Carbohydrates are a source of fuel that help the body to perform functions. They are digested slowly, resulting in a slow release of energy over a longer period of time. They keep the metabolism at a reasonably fast rate which helps

contribute to a healthy body weight.

- Fibre helps regulate bowel movements, and absorbs water keeping stools soft.

- Protein is essential for tissue repair, growth, building of lean body tissue, blood clotting and the production of hormones and enzymes. Protein also keeps the immune system healthy.

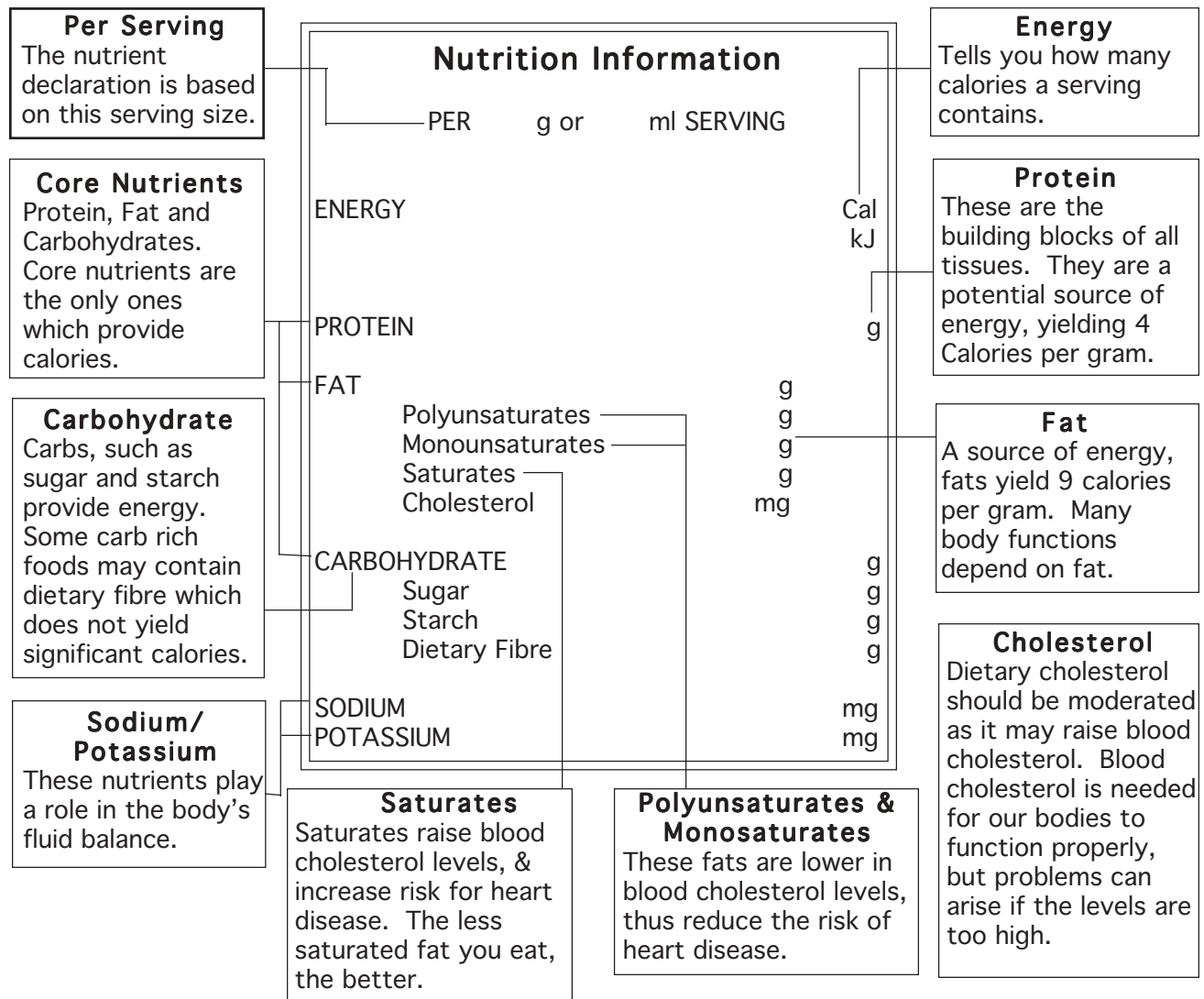
- Fat in the diet helps regulate appetite by creating the feeling of satiety. The brain matter and nervous tissue are composed primarily of fatty tissues.

- Minerals are the building blocks for blood, bone and nerves.

- Vitamins are needed to incorporate minerals into body structures or to facilitate chemical reactions involved in the metabolism of energy and metabolic reactions.

- Water makes up 80% of our body tissues. It is used to cool the body, it aids in digestion and it is important for proper functioning of the kidneys. It helps in the process of converting stored energy into fuel for our bodies.

There are three important aspects regarding diet. It is essential that we receive a variety of foods, eat a balanced amount of foods everyday, and eat foods with poor nutrient value in moderation. In order to ensure that you are consuming the correct amount of nutrients you can follow the Canada Food Guide which breaks down foods into categories based on their major nutritional components. It suggests serving sizes and number of servings for each category to ensure that we eat a balanced diet everyday. So get yourself a copy of the Canada Food Guide and post it on your fridge as a reminder. Happy eating!



Decoding Food Labels

An ingredient list must be available on all prepackaged products. Listed in descending order, the ingredients closest to the top of the list are present in the larger amounts and those to the bottom of the list are present in the smallest amounts. The food labels can help you select more nutritious food choices. Here's a little bit about what the information you read on the food labels means.

What the Label Says...	What it Means
Calorie-free	Contains no more than 1 calorie per 100 g
Calorie-reduced	Contains 50% fewer calories than the regular version
Low-calorie	Contains 15 calories or less per serving
Low in sugar	No more than 2 g of sugar per serving
No sugar added/unsweetened	May contain naturally present sugar
Sugar-free	No more than 0.25 g of sugar per 100 g
Source of energy	Contains at least 100 calories per serving

Information from becel Heart Health Information Bureau