

On Thin Ice

Pillar: Healthy Eating and Positive Social Environments

Division: III

Grade Level: 9-12

Core Curriculum Connections: Language Arts

I. Rationale: In this lesson, students research various eating disorders and their treatments. First, they analyze a poem called, "I Thought I Had to Be Perfect", and then examine an article called, "Anorexia Strategy: Family as Doctor", which proposes a controversial therapy for treating anorexia. They then conduct research on a specific eating disorder. Finally, students synthesize their understanding of the eating disorder by creating fictional case studies of teenagers suffering from common eating disorders, and make suggestions for treatment. Several extension activities are included to accommodate for different learning styles and assignment preferences.

II. Activity Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- define various types of eating disorders and explain different modes of treatment.
- recognize the risk factors associated with developing eating disorders.
- explain the importance of developing and maintaining healthy eating habits.
- demonstrate how to support those suffering from eating disorders.

III. Curriculum Outcomes: Language Arts

Grade 9 L.A.	ELA 10-30
1.1 Discover and Explore Express ideas and develop understanding Experiment with language and forms	1.1 Discover possibilities 1.1.1 Form tentative understandings, interpretations and positions
1.2 Clarify and Extend Consider others' ideas Combine ideas Extend understanding	1.2 Extend awareness 1.2.1 Consider new perspectives
2.1 Use Strategies and Cues Use prior knowledge Use comprehension strategies	2.1 Construct meaning from text and context 2.1.1 Discern and analyze context 2.1.2 Understand and interpret content 2.1.3 Engage prior knowledge 2.1.4 Use reference strategies and technologies
2.2 Respond to Texts Experience various texts	
3.1 Plan and Focus Focus attention Determine information needs Plan to gather information	3.1 Determine inquiry or research requirements 3.1.1 Focus on purpose and presentation form 3.1.2 Plan inquiry or research, and identify information needs and sources

Use a variety of sources	
3.2 Select and Process Access information Evaluate sources	3.2 Follow a plan of inquiry 3.2.1 Select, record and organize information 3.2.2 Evaluate sources, and assess information 3.2.3 Form generalizations and conclusions
3.3 Organize, Record and Evaluate Organize information Record information Evaluate information	4.1 Develop and present a variety of print and nonprint texts 4.1.2 Consider and address form, structure and medium 4.1.3 Develop content
3.4 Share and Review Share ideas and information	4.2 Improve thoughtfulness, effectiveness and correctness of communication 4.2.1 Enhance thought and understanding and support and detail 4.2.3 Consider and address matters of choice
5.2 Work within a group Cooperate with others Work in groups	5.2 Work within a group 5.2.1 Cooperate with others, and contribute to group processes

IV. Materials:

Student handouts:

- copies of Howard Kushner's poem, "*I thought I had to be perfect*" (one per student or display on the smart board)
- student journals
- classroom smart board or blackboard
- **Quick Facts on Eating Disorders** (attached)
- copies of the article "**Anorexia Strategy: Family as Doctor**" (one per student or display on smartboard)
- resources about eating disorders (web sites -see list, health textbooks, encyclopedias, books and pamphlets about eating disorders, computers with Internet access)

Useful Web Resources:

- [National Eating Disorders Information Center](#) The National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC) is a Canadian, non-profit organization, established in 1985 to provide information and resources on eating disorders and weight preoccupation. Their goal is to promote healthy lifestyles that allow people to be fully engaged in their lives. Also contains media literacy resources.
- [Directory of Canada Eating Disorder Treatment Programs](#) Information on diagnosis and treatment of major eating disorders. A very comprehensive directory of treatment programs and organizations available in each province is included as well.
- [Eating Disorders Foundation of Canada](#) The Eating Disorders Foundation of Canada is a national non-government organization (NGO), and a member of the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (INMHA), a division of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Eating Disorders Foundation of Canada acknowledges the need for urgent attention and is committed to raising funds to be directed toward the establishment of transition housing and to support ongoing research and treatment programs for eating disorders.
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [Center for Eating Disorders](#) Provides information on diagnosis and treatment of the major eating disorders.
- [National Eating Disorders Association](#) Features general information about eating disorders and body image concerns, tips for helping a friend avoid or deal with an eating problem, and treatment referrals.

V. Procedure:

i. Activating:

1. As an introduction to the lesson, display Howard Kushner's poem "*I thought I had to be perfect*" (see handout) on the smart board or put a copy on each student's desk. Ask students to read the poem and then select one of the following prompts (written on the board prior to class) to reflect upon what they have read. Record their personal thoughts, feelings, and ideas in their journals:

- What did the poem make you think about? Did it remind you of a personal experience?
- What message is the author trying to convey?
- What are the feelings of the narrator? How would you describe his tone (attitude towards the subject he is writing about)?
- Free-write on any other topic that comes to mind after reading the poem.

2. After a few minutes, ask students to share their responses. Some discussion questions may include:

- What are some different sources of pressure that Kushner identifies in his poem?
- What is the connection between striving for perfection and the problems that teens have?
- As an adolescent, can you identify with this poem?
- Explain that this poem was found on a Web site for people suffering from eating disorders. Why do you think this poem was chosen to be posted on that site?

ii. Acquiring:

3. As a class, read and discuss "[Anorexia Strategy: Family as Doctor,](#)" focusing on the following questions:

- a. What is the goal of the Maudsley approach to treating anorexia?
- b. Why is the Maudsley approach considered so controversial?
- c. How do traditional theorists usually explain the role of the parent in treating eating disorders among adolescents?
- d. According to Dr. Lock, what happens when you take "the responsibility for food and eating" away from anorexia patients?
- e. What strategies to the parents of anorexia patients' parents use in order to induce their children to eat?
- f. How have research studies on the Maudsley approach to treating anorexia explained its effectiveness and revealed its limitations?
- g. What medical complications may arise among anorexic patients?
- h. Why have few systematic studies been done on anorexia?
- i. Why is detecting anorexia among adolescents sometimes difficult?
- j. What does Dr. Lock mean by the quote, "With anorexia, you never win, you always lose"?
- k. Why did one mother equate the Maudsley approach with receiving "a parental mandate"?

4. Next, explain to students that they will be developing fictional case studies of teenagers who are suffering from various eating disorders. In order to create realistic case studies, they will first need to conduct research to identify some of the common characteristics of people who are at high risk for developing these disorders. Divide students into three groups, and assign each group an eating disorder to research: anorexia nervosa, bulimia, and binge eating disorder. Using all available resources, each group should answer the following questions to guide them through their research:

- a. How is this eating disorder defined?
- b. How does this disorder affect the daily lives of those suffering from it?

- c. Who is at special risk for developing this disorder?
- d. What types of therapy are usually used to treat this disorder?

iii. Applying:

5. After students have conducted their basic research, have each of the three groups split into two smaller groups. Each of the smaller groups writes a fictional case study of a teenager suffering from the eating disorder that they researched. Students should include the following information in their case studies

- first name for the teenager
- background of his or her childhood
- description of the teenager's relationships with his or her family, school and peers
- description of the warning signs that allowed others to realize that the teenager was suffering from an eating disorder
- a "day in the life of" look at the teenager

6. Culminating Activity: Have groups exchange the case studies they wrote with the other group(s) who researched the same eating disorder. Based on the other group's case study, each writes recommendations for the most appropriate type of treatment for that teenager. Students may choose an approach that requires a lot of parental involvement (such as the Maudsley approach highlighted in the article), or they may choose another method that they may have researched. Students should also cite supporting evidence for their treatment suggestions. In a future class, groups should present to the whole class the research information about their assigned eating disorder, share their case studies and analyses, and invite other students to voice their thoughts on their treatment suggestions.

Further Questions for Discussion:

- How do you think people tend to view psychiatric patients differently than other patients in need of medical care?
- Why do eating disorders affect certain populations more than others?
- Why are eating disorders more common among females?
- How do fashion trends affect teenagers' perceptions of their bodies?

VI. Extensions and Variations:

1. Write an information pamphlet for teenagers who suspect that they may have developed an eating disorder or have a friend who has. Include definitions of the common disorders, warning signs, health dangers, and sources where they can seek professional help in coping with a disorder. "Publish" the pamphlet and make it available in your school resource/counselling center or library.

2. Research how the human metabolism normally functions and how it could be affected by an eating disorder. Create a "How it Works" poster to illustrate the two scenarios.

3. Investigate an uncommon eating disorder, such as anorexia athletica (compulsive exercising) and body dysmorphic disorder. Repeat the main activity of the lesson, researching the disorder and creating a "case study" of a teenager suffering from it. Then, write a series of diary entries from that teenager's point of view, or a series of letters between this teenager and people concerned with his or her well-being, such as parents, other relatives, friends, school staff and eating disorder counsellors.

VII. Assessment Ideas:

- Students will be evaluated based on their initial journal entries, thoughtful participation in class discussion, participation in their group research and case studies, and final treatment suggestions.

I thought I had to be perfect

Where did so many of us get that notion?

Did we get it from parents who hoped we would make up
for all the empty spaces in their own lives?

From teachers who took for granted everything we did right
and focused on our every mistake?

From religious leaders who told us the story
of how Adam and Eve broke one rule
and were punished forever?

Do women get that message of perfection
from movies and fashion ads,
from actresses and models
with figures they can't hope to match?

Do men get it from relentless pressure to sell more,
to earn more,
and a society that makes fun of the losers in the Super Bowl
for being only the second best football team in the world?

How good do we have to be?

by Harold Kushner
Parade Magazine
September 8, 1996

TEACHER REFERENCE

EATING DISORDERS: DID YOU KNOW ... ?

Eating disorders are more of a problem for adolescents than most people realize. It is estimated that about 30% to 40% of teenagers have some kind of problem with overweight, underweight, anorexia, or bulimia.

Long-term health risks for overweight or obese persons

- heart disease
- diabetes mellitus (often called “sugar diabetes”)
- hypertension and other chronic disease
- aggravation of back or hip injuries
- complications with surgery
- decreased pulmonary (lung) function
- poor food choices may lead to being undernourished even though a person is overweight

Long-term health risks for underweight persons

- high risk of infection
- poor wound healing (cuts, scrapes, surgery takes longer to heal)
- difficult to get all needed nutrients (vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrates, fats)
- stunted growth (will not grow at the normal rate)
- premature osteoporosis
- high risk for pregnancy complications

Not all cases of thinness are serious enough to be considered life threatening, but two illnesses deserve special mention: anorexia nervosa and bulimia. It is estimated that as many as 10% to 15% of people with these eating disorders die from complications of starving, or binging and purging.

Symptoms of anorexia nervosa

- growth process slows or stops; loss of normal body weight
- sickly and overly thin appearance
- lack of energy
- loss of ability to concentrate and problem solve
- dizziness, light headedness
- dull, limp hair; hair may begin to become thin or fall out
- pale, grayish skin
- brittle nails, nails break easily
- very fine dark hair (lanugo) appears all over the body
- numbness or tingling in hands and feet
- sensitive to cold temperatures
- loss of menstruation (in females)
- damage to kidney, heart and brain
- kidney failure
- death, if prolonged

TEACHER REFERENCE

EATING DISORDERS: DID YOU KNOW ... ? (Continued)

Symptoms of bulimia

- weakness, dizziness, headaches
- stiffness or numbness in arms and legs
- muscular cramps
- stomach cramps, nausea
- difficulty swallowing or keeping food down
- swollen and/or infected salivary glands
- damage to esophagus
- bursting blood vessels in the eye
- excessive tooth decay
- electrolyte (sodium, chloride and potassium) imbalance
- potassium depletion
- diabetes or hypoglycemia
- heart damage or failure
- colon failure