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Recovering from an eating disorder in a western world

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People with eating disorders adhere to rigid rules that maintain their disorder. During recovery, these rules fade, and new rules are developed. Unfortunately, the rest of the world doesn't nurture the same recovery focused rules, so recovery can be a minefield for many people. Our clients with eating disorders are surrounded by a world that nurtures unrelenting standards and unhealthy relationships to food, weight and shape. Popular western culture objectifies women and encourages scrutiny, manipulation and transformation of bodies. Social media, television and sexist advertising impact negatively on body satisfaction, self-esteem (Bardone-Cone and Cass, 2007; Tiggemann and Slater, 2013), the perception of heaviness in the body and lowered self-worth (Bardone-Cone and Cass, 2007), and influence eating behavior (Smith, Hames, and Joiner Jr., 2013). Many women internalize the 'thin ideal' (Thompson and Stice, 2001), take a hyper-critical observer perspective of their body (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997) which then influences body-hatred. Gendered cultural context plays a role in the development and maintenance of eating disorders. The aim of this presentation is to highlight the different rules that people in recovery from eating disorders have noticed they need to live by when compared to the rest of the world. Sonja will present some recovery-oriented rules that her clients have developed, some that research recommends and others that she has observed in her clinical experience as being essential to recovery and maintaining a recovery focused view. Recommendations for clients with eating disorders, their families and friends as well as clinicians working in this field will be discussed.

Biography

Sonja Skocic has extensive experience working in the field of Eating Disorders across various public and private settings in Melbourne Australia. She is currently the Chief Psychologist at Australia's largest private psychiatric hospital The Melbourne Clinic, providing direction and support for staff and leads a team of over 30 Registered Psychologists, Psychology Registrars, and Postgraduate students. Aside from clinical work and supervision, she coordinates training and professional development for Allied Health across the hospital. She is also directly involved in the development and quality improvement of educational and therapeutic programs for patients, students and staff across the hospital.

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