



WHAT TO DO WHILE YOU WAIT TO START THERAPY?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULT CLIENTS AWAITING TREATMENT FOR EATING DISORDERS, DISORDERED EATING AND/OR BODY IMAGE CONCERNS

Dr. Melisa Arias-Valenzuela, C. Psych.
(Interim Autonomous Practice)

So you finally decided to go to therapy, and turns out there's a long wait-list to receive services. What a bummer. What do you do now?

As a psychologist working at the Ottawa River Psychology Group (ORPG), I know how frustrating wait times can be when you're already struggling as it is. But receiving psychological services isn't the only way to begin your healing process. To help you while you wait, here are some recommendations and resources I put together to jump-start your healing.

CONTACT A DIETICIAN SPECIALIZED IN EATING DISORDERS AND DISORDERED EATING

Dietitians are great professionals to contact when you're starting to work on improving your relationship with food and your body. Dietitians can help by providing you with psychoeducation on nutrition and weight science, examining your history with food, helping you build attunement to your hunger and fullness signals, examining food rules and beliefs around food and helping you improve your nutritional intake. Additionally, having basic nutritional needs met are essential to beginning the therapy process, and dietitians can be very helpful for that reason.

ORPG clinicians who work with eating disorders, disordered eating and body image concerns usually work closely with dietitians who are able to enhance and complement each other's work. So chances are, after meeting with you, I may recommend that you reach out to a dietitian anyways.

Here is a list of skilled and trusted dietitian that ORPG clinicians work with frequently and that we recommend:

- Josée Sovinsky, R.D. :
<https://www.joseesovinskynutrition.com/>
- Christine McPhail, R.D.:
<https://www.christinemcphailnutrition.com/>
- Marie-Pier Pitre-D'Orio, R.D.:
<https://www.thebalanceddietitian.com/>
- Shawna Melbourne, R.D.
and Dina Skaff, R.D. at Anchor Psychological Services:
<http://www.anchorpsychology.ca/services/>
- Jennifer Neale, R.D. :<https://nutritioniq.ca/>

CONSIDER REGISTERING FOR A SKILLS COURSE

Skills courses are great ways of acquiring coping skills to help with your overall well-being and jump-start the therapy process. Unlike group therapy, skills courses are only intended to teach participants evidence-based therapeutic skills and how to put them into practice. They can be therapeutic, but aren't therapy. We can get lots of benefits from learning therapeutic skills in a group setting. For instance, these courses can help you normalize common difficulties and experiences. Skills courses can also enable you to learn from others by having access to other participants' perspectives on the skills and how they put them into practice.

The ORPG team has put together a great number of evidence-based skills groups showing their efficacy in helping with specific difficulties. Particularly, our team has put together a few courses which incorporate compassion skills which have shown great success in helping diminish suffering associated with eating disorders, disordered eating and body image difficulties (see Türk & Waller).

For more information, visit our website's courses:
<http://ottawariverpsychology.com/upcoming-events/>

JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP

Community support groups can be beneficial when waiting for therapy. They can provide information as well as instrumental and emotional support to help you get through painful moments. I recommend the following organizations:

- Hopewell Eating Disorder Support Centre:
<https://www.hopewell.ca/treatment-resource>
- Sheena's Place: <https://sheenasplace.org/online-groups/>

REACH OUT TO SUPPORT HELPLINES (PHONE, CHAT AND TEXT)

Helplines can be quite helpful in supporting us, especially in very painful moments. They can provide immediate support and relief when going through a difficult time. They can also offer information to questions that you may have and direct you to helpful resources.

I recommend the following organizations' helplines:

- National Eating Disorders Information Centre (NEDIC):
<https://nedic.ca/blog/what-can-the-helpline-do-for-me/>
or 416-340-4156
- Anorexie et Boulimie Québec (ANEB) :
<https://anebquebec.com/> or
1 800 630-0907
- Distress Centre Ottawa: <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
or 613-238-3311

READ SOME SELF-HELP BOOKS

Self-help books can be great resources while you wait for therapy to start. They can help you gain information and an understanding of your difficulties. They can also give you a sense of direction and give you the opportunity to put some strategies into practice. Here is a list of books I find quite helpful and often recommend to my clients struggling with eating disorders, disordered eating and body image difficulties:

- Anti-diet: Reclaim Your Time, Money, Well-Being and Happiness Through Intuitive Eating by Christy Harrison, R.D.
- Body Kindness by Rebecca Scritchfield, R.D.
- Mothers, daughters and body image by Dr. Hillary McBride, Ph.D.

LISTEN TO SOME PODCASTS

Another wonderful type of resource to help while you wait for therapy to begin is listening to podcasts. Podcasts offer free, portable and easy to consume information which can be quite helpful in understanding your difficulties. Additionally, podcasts can provide great distraction in difficult moments (e.g., meal time). Here is a list of podcasts that I recommend for clients struggling with eating disorders, disordered eating and body image concerns.

- Food Psych Podcast by Christy Harrison, R.D.
- The Balanced Dietitian Podcast by Marie-Pier Pitre-D'Orio, R.D.
- Join our table Podcast (meal support) by Josée Sovinsky, R.D. and Jillian Walsh, R.D.

USE SOME APPS

Apps can also be helpful while you wait for therapy to begin. Apps can be helpful to track your mood, thoughts and behaviours. They can also help you gain awareness of some unhelpful patterns and motivate you to make some changes. For clients struggling with eating disorders, disordered eating and body image concerns, I recommend the following apps:

- Recovery Record App:
<https://www.recoveryrecord.com>
- Mindfulness Eating Coach App:
<https://amihungry.com/learning-options/mindful-eating-coaching>

FOCUS ON SELF-CARE

Let's not underestimate the importance of self-care. Making sure your basic human needs are met (e.g., sleeping, eating) as well as that you are engaging in behaviours that help you feel relaxed and happy can be very beneficial. Whether it's reaching out to loved ones, making sure that you are sleeping and eating enough, moving our bodies (or not) or removing a stressful task from the to-do list, self-care can go a long way.

*I hope these resources and recommendations
are helpful to you. Take good care!*

REFERENCES

Türk, F., & Waller, G. (2020). Is self-compassion relevant to the pathology and treatment of eating and body image concerns? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 79, 101856. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2020.101856