

# Examining Parental Influence on Suicidal Ideation in Individuals with Eating Disorders

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## DESCRIPTION

Eating disorders, complex mental health conditions characterized by disturbed eating habits and negative body image, often coexist with other mental health challenges. One particularly concerning correlation is the increased risk of suicidal ideation among individuals with eating disorders. This article delves into the intricate relationship between parental representation and suicidal ideation in eating disorder patients, Presenting awareness on the different characteristics of these interconnected challenges.

### Eating disorders and suicidal ideation

Eating disorders, encompassing conditions like anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder, are known to significantly impact both physical and mental well-being. A growing body of research has identified a higher prevalence of suicidal ideation and self-harm behaviors in individuals grappling with eating disorders. Understanding the contributing factors, including the role of parental representation, is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems.

### Parental representation

Parental representation refers to the psychological constructs individuals hold regarding their parents, encompassing perceptions, expectations, and emotional experiences. The dynamics of parental representation can influence various aspects of mental health, shaping an individual's self-esteem, coping mechanisms, and interpersonal relationships. In the context of eating disorders, the relationship between parental representation and suicidal ideation adds a layer of complexity to the already challenging field of mental health.

### The impact of parental representation on eating disorders

Research suggests that parental representation can significantly impact the development and maintenance of eating disorders.

Unhealthy parental representations, such as perceived criticism, lack of emotional support, or unrealistic expectations, may contribute to the exacerbation of disordered eating behaviors. These negative representations can also be linked to increased levels of distress, fostering an environment conducive to the emergence of suicidal ideation.

### Perceived criticism and eating disorders

Perceived criticism from parents, characterized by the belief that one is negatively evaluated or disapproved of by their parents, has been identified as a factor associated with both eating disorders and suicidal ideation. Individuals who perceive high levels of criticism may internalize these negative evaluations, leading to a heightened sense of shame and self-blame. Such emotional distress can contribute to the development of suicidal thoughts as a coping mechanism.

### Lack of emotional support

A dearth of emotional support from parents can also play a pivotal role in the complex interplay between eating disorders and suicidal ideation. Individuals who feel emotionally isolated or unsupported may turn to disordered eating behaviors as a means of coping with their emotional distress. The absence of a strong support system, including parental support, may increase vulnerability to suicidal ideation as individuals grapple with the challenges of their mental health conditions.

### Unrealistic expectations and perfectionism

Parents who set unrealistic expectations or place undue pressure on their children to meet specific standards may inadvertently contribute to the development of eating disorders. The pursuit of perfection and the constant need for validation can lead to a cycle of self-destructive behaviors. This perfectionistic mindset, when coupled with the challenges of an eating disorder, may heighten the risk of suicidal ideation as individuals struggle to meet unattainable standards.

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## Interventions and support

Understanding the intricate link between parental representation, eating disorders, and suicidal ideation is crucial for developing effective interventions and support strategies. Psychotherapeutic approaches that address both the underlying issues of eating disorders and the emotional impact of parental representations can be beneficial. Family-based therapies, focused on improving communication and fostering a supportive environment, may also play a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of negative representations contributing to mental health challenges.

## CONCLUSION

The intersection of parental representation, eating disorders, and suicidal ideation underscores the need for a comprehensive and nuanced approach to mental health care. Recognizing the impact of familial dynamics on the development and maintenance of eating disorders allows for targeted interventions that address both the immediate symptoms and the underlying psychological factors. By fostering understanding and empathy, mental health professionals can work collaboratively with individuals and their families to break the chains of negative representations and build a foundation for lasting recovery.