

THINK AGAIN...ASD, SPD, OR ED?
A GUIDE TO BEHAVIORS
FOR EATING DISORDER PROVIDERS

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Answer these questions: Are the below behaviors considered eating disorders? Could they be symptoms of something else? Could it be eating disorder AND something else?

- Undereating or restricting
- Overeating, bingeing, or mindless eating
- Bingeing and purging or just purging
- Over exercise
- Challenges with starting a meal
- Getting up frequently during the meal
- Taking a long time to complete meals
- Bolting, fleeing, or refusing to come to the table
- Needing to use special silverware, plates, bowls, cups
- Forgetting to eat
- Using separate bowls for food
- Poor group participation or difficulty forming sentences/talking during sessions
- Wearing baggy clothes
- Arguing or yelling about food
- Strict rules regarding definitions related to food/exercise
- Not following directions
- Messy eater
- Arranging food on plate in a certain way
- Taking too big of bites
- Picking apart food
- Over spicing foods
- Refusing to eat something new
- Poor food variety



Does the why really matter? ...YES!!!

In order for *successful* eating disorder recovery it is *essential* to address the *underlying why* of the symptoms...*don't assume EVERY behavior is related to the eating disorder!!!*

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THINK AGAIN -ASD, SPD, or ED?

Behavior	ED Possible Explanation	Think Again- ASD or SPD Explanation
Undereating or restricting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fear of weight gain, food ingredients... -emotionally driven -body dysmorphia -thought distortions -wanting control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -poor hunger fullness awareness or processing -hypersensitive to food (texture, color, shape, etc) -dyspraxia or difficulty chewing, swallowing, using silverware, etc -environmental sensory factors (noise, smells, touch, etc) -difficulty set shifting -disinterested in food
Overeating or binging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -emotionally driven -poor impulse control -low self esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -difficulty set shifting -food is providing oral or other sensory input which is calming/organizing -difficulty with interoception and hunger/fullness cues
Binging and Purging or just purging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fear of gaining weight -anxiety from a binge -wanting to retain some calories but afraid to eat without purging -emotionally driven... -enjoys food but afraid of calories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -triggered gag reflex through nauseous sensory input -difficulty set shifting -throwing up can be neurologically organizing or calming because it provides intense sensory input throughout the body -stimming behavior -fight or flight response to sensory stimuli -stuck in thought/behavior loop
Over exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -afraid of weight gain -body dysmorphia -feels good -thought distortions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sensory seeking -movement provides sensory input that organizes, focuses -unable to tell when body is tired, hurt, or sick -difficulty set shifting -special interest -stuck in thought/behavior loop
Underactivity or avoiding active activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -health reasons -emotionally driven -poor self-image -low motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -far senses hypersensitivities (i.e. issues with the texture of workout clothes, the coolness of weights or the sound of a gym) -near senses hyper/hyposensitivities (i.e. can't tolerate weight bearing) -difficulty set shifting

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ED Behavior or ASD/SPD Behavior?

Chart 1

ED Behavior	Possible ASD/SPD Explanation
Challenges with starting a meal or forgetting to eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Difficulty set shifting -New environment -Difficulty with executive functioning
Getting up frequently during the meal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sensory -Hyperactivity -Difficulty set shifting
Taking a long time to complete meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dyspraxia -Oral motor issues
Bolting, fleeing, or refusing to come to the table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sensory (i.e. sound of a blender, air from a fan, the noise of the dishes, the need to move, the smell of the food, etc) -Difficulty with set shifting
Needing to use special silverware, plates, bowls, cups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sensory (feel, color, look, or weight of object makes eating easier) -Oral motor issues or dyspraxia -Need for consistency
Forgetting to eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Difficulty with executive functioning -Sensory -In a thought/behavior loop -Fixated on an interest
Using separate bowls for food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Visually needs to have items separated to make sense of them -Too much on a plate can make it hard to decide where to start (executive functioning)

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ED Behavior or ASD/SPD Behavior?

Chart 2

Behavior	Possible ASD/SPD Explanation
Wearing baggy clothes	-Sensory
Arguing or yelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Overexplaining bc not being understood or not understanding what is being asked -Not picking up on your nonverbal cues -Overstimulated or other sensory issues -Poor voice modulation or unaware of tone -Trying to communicate but not feeling heard
Strict rules regarding definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Inflexible with word usage/specific definitions for words -Taking something they heard or read as fact -Difficulty with central coherence
Poor group participation or difficulty forming sentences/talking during sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Difficulty with auditory processing -Dyspraxia, hard time with turning thoughts into words -Over/under stimulated -Difficulty attending bc of sensory related issues -Difficulty set shifting from previous activity or adjusting to a disruption in schedule -Difficulty organizing thoughts or doesn't know where to begin -Can't talk with eye contact
Not following directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Not understanding directions or is given too many directions at once -Difficulty with nonverbal cues -Not given enough time to process info -Sensory overwhelmed -Difficulty with executive functioning
Showing little emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Difficulty with oral motor skills and facial expressions -Not understanding what he/she is feeling

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Chart 3

Behavior	Possible ASD/SPD Explanation
Messy eater	-Dyspraxia -Sensory (tactile)
Arranging food on plate in a certain way	-Visual -Sensory (tactile, visual)
Taking too big of bites	-Dyspraxia -Oral motor -Sensory (proprioception, tactile, visual)
Picking apart food	Sensory (proprioception, visual, tactile) Visual need to see food to make sense of it
Over spicing foods	-Oral motor -Sensory (taste, tactile, smell)
Refusing to eat something new	-Change in routine -Sensory -Dyspraxia -Dislike of food -Change period
Poor food variety	-Sensory components (taste, texture, size, shape, smell, color, etc of the food) -Need for routine and consistence -No desire to eat other foods

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