Behavioral Considerations in Weight Loss Surgery
Why Do I Have to See A Psychologist?

• TO HELP YOU, THE VETERAN, SUCCEED!
• A mental health evaluation is required for Bariatric Surgery
• We want to identify barriers to health behavior change and help you address them
  – Psychological: mental health conditions, beliefs, attitude
  – Social: relationships, family, cultural
  – Practical: financial, transportation
• We want to identify strengths you can use to facilitate change
  – History of behavior change
  – Social support
  – Coping strategies
Bariatric Surgery is *Only* a Tool

- **Bariatric Surgery is NOT:**
  - A way to lose weight without effort, while eating whatever you want, and without exercising

- **Bariatric Surgery requires:**
  - Modifying your food intake *before* and after surgery
  - Developing a sustainable, lifelong exercise program (despite chronic pain, weather, travel)
  - Significant lifestyle changes
Behavioral Considerations In Bariatric Surgery

Common behaviors that hinder or promote weight loss

• Alcohol consumption
• Problematic eating style
• Emotional stability
• Relationships and weight loss
• Commitment
Alcohol Consumption

• Surgery changes the way alcohol is metabolized in your body.

• Some of these changes can lead to alcohol misuse which can lead to:
  – Weight gain
  – Nutritional deficiencies
  – Poor overall health
  – Safety risks (e.g., driving)
  – Development of alcohol use disorder

• Therefore, we ask you to stop using alcohol before and after surgery
Problematic Eating Styles

EATING STYLES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED BEFORE SURGERY:

- **Binge Eating**
  - Binge eating episodes are when you eat more food than is typical for a meal and you feel a loss of control over your eating

- **Grazing**
  - Snacking throughout the day
  - Skipping early meals and then eating small amounts the rest of the day

- **Night Eating Syndrome**
  - Eating most of your food after the evening meal
  - May feel the need to eat to get back to sleep

- **Eating Too Quickly**
  - If you eat too fast, your brain does not get the signal that you are satiated and you may overeat
Emotional Stability

• Emotional changes following Bariatric surgery can be unpredictable (positive or negative).
• Letting go of food as a way of managing emotion/stress can be challenging.
• Significant/rapid change in appearance can affect your sense of identity and security.
  – Those with a history of sexual trauma may find increased attention with weight loss distressing.
• We will want you to work with a mental health provider before surgery if you:
  – Use food to cope with emotions
  – Have a history of sexual trauma
  – Have concerns about your changing appearance
  – Have untreated or unmanaged mental health conditions
Impact of Weight Loss on Relationships

• Relationship changes often occur
  – You may like some and dislike others
  – Partners may feel jealous and/or fear you will reject them if you lose weight
  – Friends may treat you differently

• Social gatherings may be different
  – Restaurants: What will it be like to sit at a restaurant unable to eat much while everyone else enjoys a leisurely meal?
  – Being offered food: How will you respond to friends/family offering/pushing food?

• Coping with changes in relationships:
  – Talk about these issues with the Bariatric team or your mental health provider
  – Utilize social support during your process of making lifestyle changes
  – Create open lines of communication with loved ones
  – Practice assertiveness skills (e.g., avoid pressure to resume old lifestyle/habits)
Commitment

• Participation in our Bariatric program requires dedication and commitment. You must:
  – Attend appointments as scheduled
  – Get lab work as requested
  – Take medications/vitamins as prescribed
  – Adhere to health care team recommendations
  – Maintain healthy diet & exercise
  – Abstain from substances

• It is important you are committed to putting forth effort and making the recommended, positive changes.
What Can I do to Start Preparing for Bariatric Surgery?

- Change your relationship with food
  - What is important to you besides food? What do you value?
    - Family, friends, hobbies, recreation, health...
  - Start eating healthy foods in appropriate portions
- Exercise
- Manage mental health conditions
- Think about how you will cope with the lifestyle changes required of surgery
When Will I Be Ready For Bariatric Surgery?

• Preparing for Bariatric surgery takes effort
  – Adopt a healthy lifestyle NOW (don’t wait until you have surgery—that’s too late!)
• Work with your team to get prepared
• Don’t look at the recommendations as “road blocks” to surgery, see them as an investment in your health regardless of whether you are approved for surgery
• Keep in mind our recommendations are based on scientific evidence and years of experience to ensure you have the safest and most successful outcome
Preparing for Bariatric Surgery is a Process

• Remember, you have ONE CHANCE for surgery to be successful.
  – We want to make sure your medical health conditions, mental health conditions, and health behaviors are optimized before you have this elective surgery
  – If they aren’t, you are at risk of complications and/or regaining the weight and redeveloping chronic health conditions

• We want to help you be successful, safe, and healthy

• We look forward to meeting you and helping you on the path to a healthier you!