Behavioral Considerations in Weight Loss Surgery

Behavioral Medicine
Why Do I Have to See A Psychologist?

• TO HELP YOU, THE VETERAN, SUCCEED!
• It is a required evaluation for Bariatric Surgery
• We want to identify potential barriers to health behavior change
  – 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
Behavioral Considerations In Bariatric Surgery

The following can be affected by weight loss surgery – we are here to help you...

• Alcohol consumption
• Problematic eating styles
• Emotional stability
• Supportive Relationships
• Commitment
Alcohol Consumption

• Surgery changes the way alcohol is metabolized in your body.
• Some of these changes can lead to alcohol misuse
• Alcohol misuse before or after surgery can lead to:
  – Weight gain
  – Nutritional deficiencies
  – Poor overall health
  – Safety risks (e.g., driving)
Problematic Eating Styles

Eating Styles that we address:

• 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 eating small amounts throughout the day

• Night Eating Syndrome
  – Eating after the evening meal, often during the middle of the night
  – May feel the need to eat to return to sleep

• Eating Too Quickly
  – If you eat too fast, your brain does not get the signal that you are full 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.
• We help you increase your awareness of and work on managing emotional struggles before and after Bariatric surgery.
Emotional Stability

• We help you work with a mental health provider 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

• Changes in relationships often occur after surgery
• Social gatherings may change

• Coping with changes in relationships:
  – We encourage you to:
    • Talk about these issues with the Bariatric team
    • 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.
  – Attend appointments as scheduled
  – Adhere to health care team recommendations

• It is important you are committed to putting forth effort and making the recommended, positive changes.
You CAN make healthy lifestyle changes TODAY, no matter how you felt YESTERDAY!
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...

• Exercise

• Manage mental health conditions
When Will I Be Ready For Bariatric Surgery?

• Preparing for Bariatric surgery takes effort
  – Adopt a healthy lifestyle
• 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.
• Keep in mind our recommendations are based on scientific evidence and years of experience to ensure you have the safest and most successful outcome
Behavioral Medicine/Psychology at the Palo Alto VA

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