What is an eating disorder?

Food and eating play a very important part in our lives, we all vary in the foods we like, how much we need to eat, and when we like to eat. Food is essential for our health and development. It’s not unusual to experiment with different eating habits, for example you may have decided to become a vegetarian or tried changing your diet to improve your health. However, some eating patterns can be damaging. Problems with food can begin when it is used to cope with those times when you are bored, anxious, angry, lonely, ashamed or sad. Food becomes a problem when it is used to help you to cope with painful situations or feelings, or to relieve stress perhaps without you even realising it. If this is how you deal with emotions and feelings and you are unhappy about it, then you should try to talk to someone you trust. Try not to bottle things up - this is not helpful to you or other people around you, it won't make you feel any better and the problem is unlikely to go away.

It is unlikely that an eating disorder will result from a single cause. It is much more likely to be a combination of many factors, events, feelings or pressures which lead to you feeling unable to cope. These can include: low self-esteem, family relationships, problems with friends, the death of someone special, problems at work, college or at university, lack of confidence, sexual or emotional abuse. Many people talk about simply feeling ‘too fat’ or ‘not good enough’.

Often people with eating disorders say that the eating disorder is the only way they feel they can stay in control of their life, but as time goes on it isn’t really you who is in control – it is the eating disorder. Some people also find they are affected by an urge to harm themselves or misuse alcohol or drugs you may find that in common with many other people you experience feelings of despair and shame. You may have a feeling of failure or lack of control because you cannot overcome these feelings about food on your own.

Who do eating disorders affect and when?

Anyone can develop an eating disorder, regardless of age, sex, cultural or racial background, although the people most likely to be affected tend to be young women; however, it is not unusual for an eating disorder to appear in middle age.

Are you suffering from an eating disorder such as anorexia, bulimia or a compulsive overeating disorder?

Are you a parent, carer or partner of a person with an eating disorder?
Would you like to talk to others in the same position, share your experiences, learn more about the help available and get support and advice?

Then come along to the Halton Eating Disorder Self Help Group we’re located at The Vine Street Centre, 30a Widnes Road, Widnes, WA8 6AD

The group meets on the last Thursday of every month at 6.30pm and finishes at approximately 8pm

If you are interested or would like more information please contact Terry or Nic on 0151 495 3991 or email us at halton.eatingdisorder@gmail.com