

Worksheet 11.1: Tolerance of a healthy weight

Read *SBC*, Chapter 11, pp. 152–61 on modelling emotional intelligence. One of the key goals for treatment is to restore a healthy body weight and it can be one of the most difficult goals for Edi to either desire or accept.

At some stage Edi has to work out what their own individual right weight is, reach it and then tolerate the initial discomfort that very often accompanies weight gain. Healthy weight ranges are wide, and it can take time for Edi to get used to the fact that weight will stabilise within a healthy range. A real fear for many sufferers is that treatment will make them 'fat', and the ED voice is likely to be a constant reminder of this. This can trigger very intense emotions, especially as Edi moves towards the end of the treatment programme. Carers can use the ALVS approach to notice and to help Edi to manage and tolerate this distress (Module 5, Exercise 5.2).

In pairs or as a group think of a scenario in which Edi has told you she is finding weight gain intolerable or use the scenario below. Use the ALVS approach to try to come alongside Edi in a more empathic and supportive way. Write your ideas here or up on the flipchart or role play a conversation between the carer and Edi.

Scenario

Elizabeth comes from a big-boned family. All her female relatives are large. She was mortified when she started her periods at the age of 11, and before any of her friends. She started to diet when she found a chart on a website that suggested she was 2 stone overweight for her age and height. She is now 14 and her eating is chaotic. She starves all day and then comes home determined to eat a healthy evening meal. She is not happy with her current weight and wants to be thinner, despite the fact that most evenings she ends up bingeing and purging. Her Mum gets very upset and the result has been that Elizabeth tries hard to hide her behaviour from Mum. Together they oscillate from intense emotional outbursts to complete emotional avoidance.

Attend

Label

Validate

Soothe

Within this conversation it might have been very tempting for Mum to step in and argue with logic about Elizabeth's comments about her size. A calmer approach is one in which Mum sidesteps the reassurance trap and continues to calmly investigate Elizabeth's emotions using the MI skills she has learned. Reflections (ALVS is a complex reflection) can really help to validate what Elizabeth is feeling and affirmations can show Mum's belief that Elizabeth can learn to self-soothe and redirect difficult emotions. In this way Mum allows Elizabeth to feel emotional pain and encourages her to talk about that, while offering unconditional love and support.