

Helping You Help Yourself: University of Calgary Researchers Try Self-Help Manual to Treat Binge Eating

By Alexandra Davison, on February 19th, 2011

When the word “eating disorder” is brought up, anorexia or bulimia often spring to mind. However binge eating, although a less well-known disorder, is currently affecting many Canadians in a serious way. As such, researchers at the [University of Calgary](#) are working on a unique new project that aims to help binge eaters help themselves.

Binge eating disorder is a mental condition that occurs when you cannot control what—or how much—you eat in a short period of time. Victims of the disorder often feel depressed and guilty as they eat, but are unable to stop.

PhD candidate in clinical psychology at the University of Calgary [Phil Masson](#) has developed a self-help manual that aims “to help people stop binge eating by learning healthy ways to cope with stressful situations, and giving them new strategies for controlling their emotions that don’t include food.” While self-help manuals are a common part of everyday society, the use of a self-help approach combined with empirical research is relatively unique in the field of psychology. However, if the trial proves useful, it could contribute to validating the possibly integral role of self-help methods in helping to treat mental disorders like binge eating.

A trial of the self-help program was launched during Eating Disorder Awareness Week, February 6-12, and was open to anyone suffering from the disorder. Participants in the free program were asked to work their way through the self-help manual over a 13-week period. During the trial, participants would receive six phone calls from a therapist. The participants were broken into two groups: those that would receive the calls while they worked through the manual, and those who would work through it themselves and then receive calls from the therapist after. By breaking up the participants this way the manual can be tested more conclusively.

Researchers hope that the findings from this study will enable them to prove the usefulness and effectiveness of the manual, with the hopes of getting it published for use by the public.

Researchers explore new self-help therapy for Binge Eating Disorder [[University of Calgary](#)]



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