

# AAPI EATING DISORDER RISK FACTORS



Addressing Eating Disorders within AAPI communities involves considering unique cultural, social, and psychological factors that may affect the development and maintenance of these conditions. Some key risk factors include:

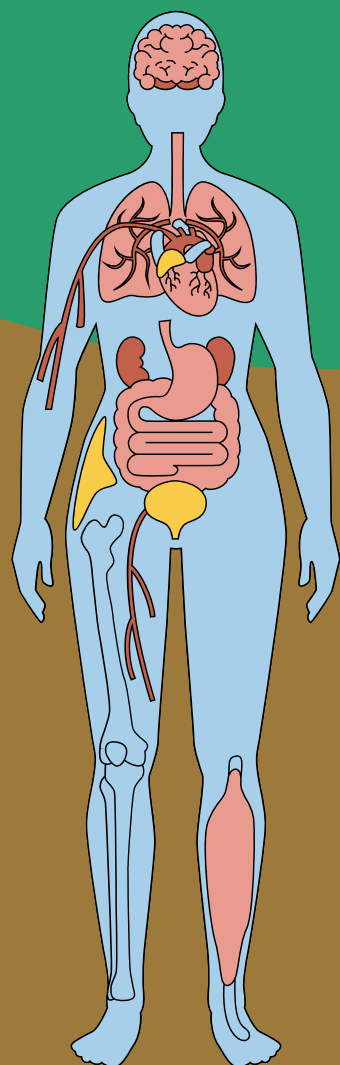
## SOCIO- CULTURAL

- High societal value placed on thinness
- Exposure to conflicting Western beauty standards
- Adoption of Westernized diets and disconnection with traditional eating habits and body intuition



## PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Tendency to suppress emotions or restrain negative feelings
- Self-surveillance & body monitoring
- Disordered eating masking as “effort” to achieve academic and professional success



## BIOLOGICAL

- Specific genetic factors may influence metabolism, hormonal and neurological reaction to food, and predisposition to eating disorders and comorbid illnesses



## FAMILIAL

- Pressures related to “honor” and “success” impacting self-esteem
- Strong stigma around mental health issues and discouragement of open discussion



Because eating disorders come in different forms and types. Use this [screening tool](https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/screening-tool/) from the National Eating Disorder Association to determine if you need help:

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/screening-tool/>

# 5 STEPS TO FINDING SUPPORT



## 1. ACKNOWLEDGE

It's important to acknowledge the fear and cultural stigmas associated with seeking help that most AAPIs experience. You might feel guilty of burdening others, uncomfortable of showing vulnerability and ashamed from not being able to "fix the problem" on your own. All of these feelings are normal!

*HEALING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD AND BODY CAN ONLY START WHEN YOU ASK FOR HELP.*



## 2. IDENTIFY SUPPORT SYSTEM

*QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN IDENTIFYING THE SOURCES OF HELP:*

- Do you have an emergency support person? (e.g. call your doctor, take you to a hospital, etc.)
- Is there anyone you trust within your family / friend circle / school / workplace / religious institutions / recreational organizations that you can talk to? (Think of someone who's compassionate and non-judgmental in terms of health-related issues.)
- Are you comfortable speaking out or asking questions on an online community (e.g. Reddit / Discord / other forums)?
- Would you be comfortable joining a support group with people who share similar struggles as you do?
- Are you comfortable talking to someone on a crisis hotline?

## 3. WHO/WHERE

- Helplines for immediate help/crisis ([Project HEAL](#), [ANAD](#), [NAED](#))
- Medical providers like primary care doctors, gynecologists, psychiatrists - highly recommend you to go with a loved one
- Eating disorder-informed therapists ([LEAP directory](#), [BIPOC directory](#))
- Eating disorder-informed dietitians ([LEAP directory](#), [BIPOC directory](#))
- Support groups ([list from Project HEAL](#))
- Eating disorder forums (Expert-guided threads on Reddit, [Around the Dinner Table Forum for parents](#))



## 4. LEARN

Along with the support of your loved ones, you will begin to learn a lot about how the eating disorders or disordered eating behaviors have impacted you.

*POTENTIAL STEPS:*

- Medical assessment which determines how your body is functioning at this moment and the severity of the condition.
  - [Higher levels of care \(inpatient/residential\)](#) is recommended for those who requires medical attention.
  - [Outpatient care](#) is usually for those who are medically stable, or have not responded well to intensive treatment programs.
- Ideally, a care team consists of an ED-informed MD, therapist and RD to support recovery at any levels of care.
- Alternatively, support groups led by ED-informed therapists and RDs could be helpful.
- Allow time and compassion for yourself for a long-term healing process.

## 5. LOOKING AHEAD

Healing from an eating disorder is not easy. You will need to try many things multiple times.

*THIS IS NOT TO DISCOURAGE YOU FROM SEEKING HELP, BUT TO SHARE WITH YOU THAT RECOVERY TAKES TIME AND IS NOT A LINEAR PROCESS.*

During this process, you will gain a fresh understanding of yourself, release burdens that you hold, develop coping skills, and uncover ways to lead a fulfilling life.





# RESOURCES

## Support Groups / Community Circles

- [Project HEAL free ED support groups](#)
- [Nalgona Positivity Pride harm reduction community circles](#)
- [FEDUP Collective trans & intersex ED resources](#)
- [Yellow Chair Collective disordered eating groups](#)

## General ED Information

- [AAPI ED Resources \(LEAP 4 AAPI\)](#)
- [BIPOC ED provider list \(BIPOC ED Conference\)](#)
- [AAPI & Eating Disorders \(National Eating Disorder Association\)](#)

## Culturally-Competent Mental Health Resources

- [AAPI provider directory \(LEAP 4 AAPI\)](#)
- [AANHPI mental health provider list \(National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association\)](#)
- [Asian Mental Health Collective](#)
- [BIPOC & LGBTQIA+ provider list \(Inclusive Therapists\)](#)
- [South Asians/South Asian Americans mental health perspectives](#)
- [Japanese/Japanese Americans mental health \(1000 Cranes for Recovery\)](#)
- [Korean/Korean Americans mental health \(Mustard Seed Generation\)](#)
- [Chinese/Chinese Americans mental health \(Mental Health Association for Chinese Communities\)](#)
- [AAPI mental health blog posts](#)
- [Mental health in Mandarin Chinese: a starter kit for dialogue in the Los Angeles Times \(Oct, 31, 2023\)](#)

## Media

### Articles:

- [Personal stories from Thick Dumpling Skin \(posts prior to Mar 25, 2017\)](#)
- [Article on raising awareness on eating disorders within AAPI folks \(Jun 6, 2020\)](#)

### Visual Podcast / TV:

- [The Hot Pot on body dysmorphia and disordered eating](#)
- [TV segment on eating disorders by On Lok \(Cantonese\)](#)

### Audio Podcasts:

- [The Potluck Club \(English\)](#)
- [The Recovery Warrior Show \(English\)](#)
- [女子健心室 Girl Power Room \(Mandarin Chinese\)](#)
  - [Episode playlist on Food Freedom 飲食自由](#)
  - [Episode playlist on Talk About Food 飲食講堂](#)
- [Relatively Asian, Ep.13 \(English\)](#)
- [Body Justice, Ep. 36 \(English\)](#)
- [DishWithDina, Ep. 33 \(English\)](#)
- [Nourish To Flourish \(English\)](#)

Please contact LEAP 4 AAPI at [contact@leap4asian.com](mailto:contact@leap4asian.com) if you have any suggestions on additional resources that are not included on here. Our team reviews and updates these resources periodically to ensure they are relevant to our community.