

The Maudsley Method for Treating Anorexia

The Maudsley Method is a relatively new method of treating Anorexia Nervosa. Traditionally, therapists have been taught when treating Anorexia or another eating disorder, is to find the root cause of the eating disorder and explore the faulty thinking/perceptions of the individual. At the root of eating disorders is a feeling of loss of control and using food as a tool, whether you are binging on food or refusing to eat as seen in Anorexia. The core symptom of Anorexia is the refusal to maintain a body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for age and the height of the individual. Treatment methods for Anorexia in the past have comprised of either family, group, behavioral, or cognitive therapy or a mixture of these therapies. The treatment model in the past has been to take a multi-disciplinary approach utilizing the services of a medical doctor, nutritionist, therapist, while targeting the negative feelings and thoughts about weight and the self. This approach has also a lot of the time placed blame on a particular family member/members as a result of the current negative eating behaviors.

The Maudsley method differs from previous methods in that the first and foremost goal is not to identify the root of what is causing the eating disorder and mend the thinking process, it's goal is to restore the person to a more healthy; balanced weight. This method uses the family of the person with the eating disorder. The child is not labeled with an eating disorder, rather the child is totally separate from the eating disorder, almost if the eating disorder is a separate entity. No one is blamed for the present and current circumstances and treatment now focuses on the family coming up with solutions with the patient on how to remedy the problem and get their child to eat. Instead of delving into feelings, thoughts, root causes, etc., this model demands immediate action to get the person to eat and think differently about the way they eat. The premise of this method is that in order for the therapeutic process to work, the person with Anorexia must be at a stable enough weight in order for the mind and brain to work in the therapy process.

The phases of this treatment are: 1.) Help the child gain weight in order to be stable. Punishment and negativity are not used when the child/adolescent does not achieve their target weight gain 2.) This phase of the treatment requires the parent/caregiver transferring the control of eating back to the child and making him/her completely responsible for what, how much, when they eat. In the first step, the parents and the child are working in conjunction regarding eating behaviors. 3.) The last phase of this method involves individual therapy with a mental health professional. This occurs when the child can maintain 95% of the target weight. This last phase is when the therapist addresses past issues regarding negative feelings/thoughts, in order words the root causes of the eating disorder.

This particular method addresses immediately the physical symptoms of the eating disorder, in other words getting the child to gain weight and to be stable, it also does not place blame on anyone in particular and the family is very involved. One disadvantage may be that the family is very involved and the parents have a lot of control initially over the eating behaviors of

the child. In addition, this particular method requires a large time investment and commitment from the parents and may be labor-intensive for the parents as well as the individual. Over all, for some families this may be a favorable method over previous treatment models that have been utilized in the past.

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