

「苦與樂」研討會

「苦與樂」專題討論第五節

Pains and Suffering of Self-Starvation: Experiences of Chinese Patients Suffering from Anorexia Nervosa and their Families

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The pains and suffering of self-starvation is not only an individual experience but also a family experience as it impacts negatively on the afflicted adolescents and their families physically, psychologically and socially. Hitherto, there is insufficient local literature in this area. This paper reports part of the results of a cross-disciplinary local study, which was conducted from December 1, 1999 to November 30, 2003. Data were gathered through 25 in-depth pre-treatment family interviews and video-tape reviews of the first family interview of ten emaciated adolescents and their families who had completed the family treatment provided by the Family Clinic, Department of Social Work of our university. The results of this study have shown that these self-starving adolescents suffered terribly from an excessive preoccupation with eating-disordered symptoms including food intake, caloric content and usage, weight loss and exercise. Self-starvation threatened their health, shattered their morale, lowered their self-esteem, affected their study, and deprived them a company of peers and normal social activities. The effects of self-starvation had spilled over into their family life too. Different aspects of family functioning were detrimentally affected. Family life of these adolescents was predominantly controlled by self-starvation. The results of this study have led empirical support to the need of local mental health professionals to adopt dual focuses in helping these self-starving adolescents: individual-focused and family-focused.

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