

THE KILLER OF YOUTH

An Oration

by
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Somewhere in America today a ghastly looking teenage girl stood adoringly before a full length mirror. She examined her gaunt body, criticizing it. It was not the perfection she visualized for herself.

Stark naked, she began quick, intense, ritualistic exercises, straining every sinew in her seventy pound body. After thirty minutes of effort, she stopped, stepped upon a scale, only to step off and begin exercising again.

She, and hundreds like her, are victims of the insidious and deadly psycho-physical illness known as anorexia nervosa, better know simply as anorexia.

Very simply, the disease can best be identified as a condition in which there is an aversion to food and a grasping desire to lose weight so as to become ever more "beautiful" in the eyes of the victim. Once the procedure begins, there is no cure. This once beautiful girl must, for the rest of her life, be aware of her illness, realize the dangers and be receptive to professional assistance.

Anorexia has reached so deeply into our society today that all of us have probably, unknowingly, witnessed victims in our own circle of activities. This is especially true if we are young or are often associated with the younger person.

Because we are associated with the victims of anorexia, we have it within our power to help rescue them from their own self-destructiveness. I appeal to you to be alert to the problem and take action if there appears to be a problem with a friend or associate.

Do not attempt to "straighten the person out." This is a psychological problem resulting in physical deterioration.

Generally, physicians believe anorexia is the result of environmental pressures. It is a symbolic oral rebellion against over-controlling parents, spouses or friends. It can be an escape mechanism from fears about sex, the maturing body and physical development difficulties.

Add to this the present society's fixation with "thin is beautiful" and one has a powder keg with the fuse lit for potential disaster. At the close of the twentieth century, we are the first culture in the world believing that any body fat must be gone from the body before we can accept it.

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