

More to know about food and the body

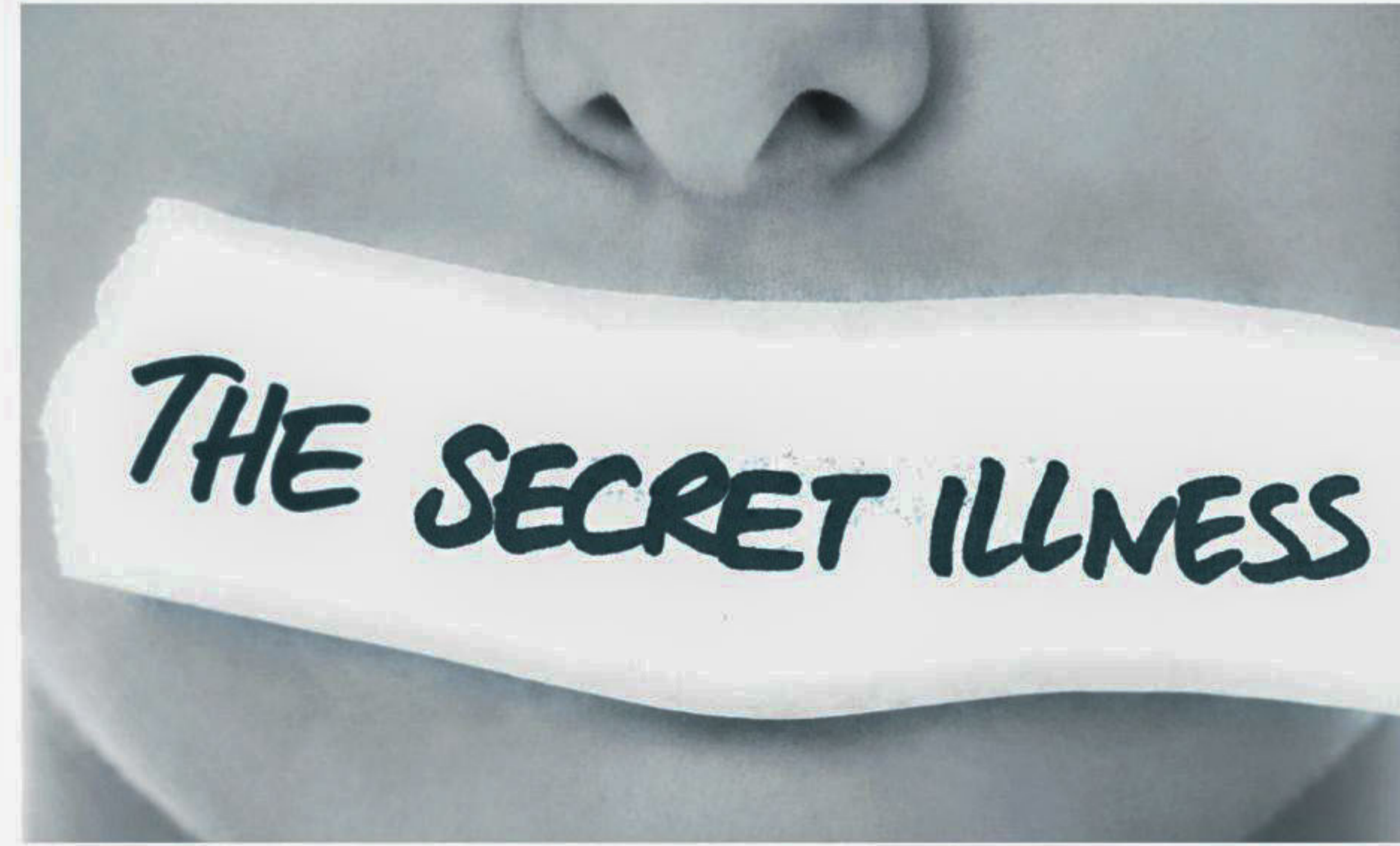
How many times have you envied the dramatic weight loss of a friend, overlooking her preoccupation with food and dieting, not realising she could be suffering from an eating disorder? Yes, that's right, eating disorders are on the increase but most of us don't recognise people having eating disorders because of the secretive nature of these conditions. In addition, those who are obese have often been provided with sheets of nutritional guidelines instead of counselling, leading to a major misinterpretation of this matter.

Let's address one of the disorders that is often stigmatised and underestimated in our society: binge eating disorder (BED). This is when a person eats large quantities of food very quickly to the point of distress. They usually lose control during the binge, only to express discomfort of guilt afterwards. Often, they have secretive food habits such as eating secretly or in a solitary environment. They frequently feel disgusted about their body and may choose this method due to depression and anxiety. While there is a positive correlation between BED and weight gain, not every-

one who is overweight has BED. It is important to understand the seriousness of this condition because it may lead to potential health conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and much more.

On the contrary, anorexia is often more clandestine from our eyes but is considered equally risky. This is when one suffers from self-starvation, resulting in weight that is far too low. It also involves a constant fixation with weight and how to prevent gaining weight. Doctors have suggested that people suffering from anorexia often make remarks such as 'feeling fat' or overweight despite the intense weight loss in addition to denying hunger and persistent excuses for avoiding meals. Does that ring a bell for someone?

If you still think this is not an issue to visit your doctor for, you should change your mind already. Self-starvation causes your body to be deprived of vital nutrients preventing it from functioning normally, therefore forcing your body to slow down its metabolism. You may be at the risk of low blood pressure, change in heart muscle or



even reduction in bone density.

Lastly, let me inform you about bulimia nervosa. It is very similar to BED since it also involves gorging on large amounts of food to the point of losing control during the binge. However it is followed by extreme measures to prevent weight loss such as

self-induced vomiting using laxatives or diuretics.

Doctors have explained why so many people today suffer from food disorders. One vital reason is poor self-respect. In addition, eating disorders could also be a consequence after one suffers from abuse or a traumatic event. Over the years, there has been extensive evidence to support this theory.

As distressing as these conditions are, they can be tackled with CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy). It is when a person is asked to address the condition behaviourally and strongly consider the thoughts that persuaded them to eat and not just impose restriction on themselves.

Eating disorders occur especially when someone is eating or not eating to intercept painful feelings. So spare your mind and body all that adversity and visit a counsellor already.

By Mayesha Raidah



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