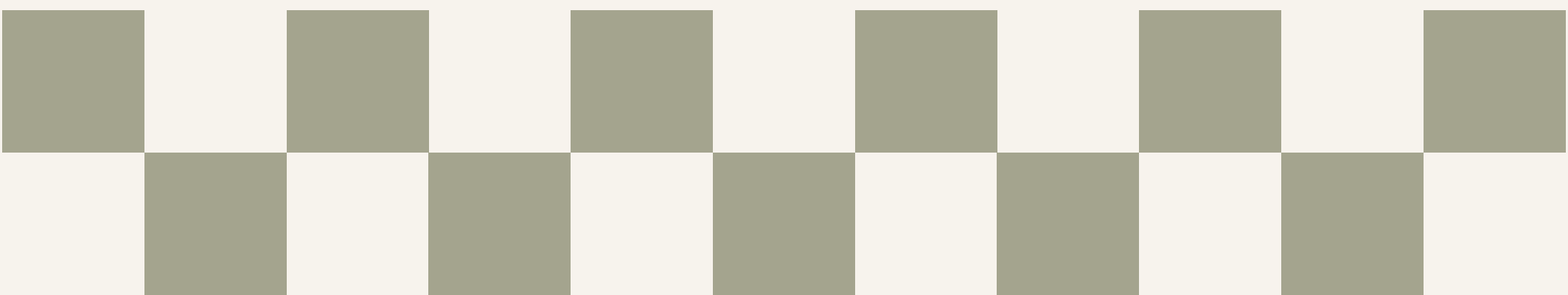




# Eating Disorder Awareness: Conversation Guide





# *Signs of Possible Disordered Eating*

Therapists who do not specialize in eating disorders are often in a key position to notice early signs. Some possible indicators include:

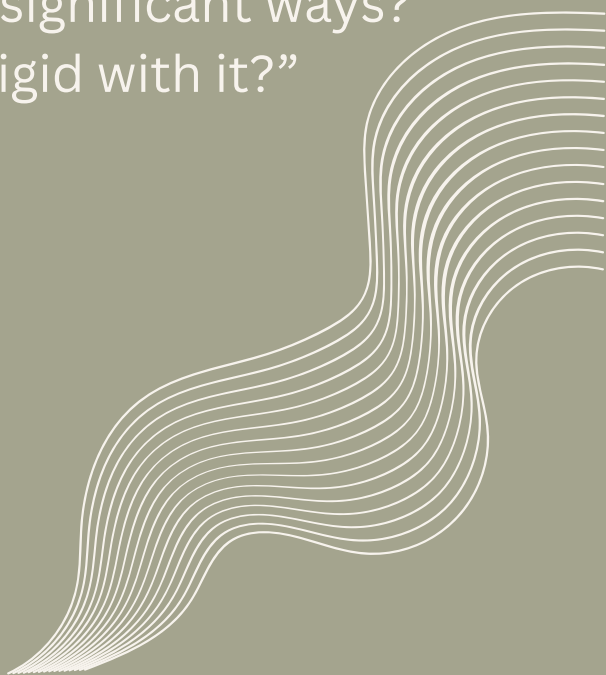
- Frequent dieting or chronic food restriction
- Intense fear of weight gain or preoccupation with weight/shape
- Skipping meals or rigid food rules
- Episodes of feeling out of control with food
- Shame, secrecy, or anxiety around eating
- Sudden changes in weight, mood, or social eating patterns
- Excessive or compulsive exercise
- Gastrointestinal complaints with no clear medical cause

## *Therapist-Friendly Ways to Ask About Food & Body*

Gentle, neutral questions can open the door without increasing shame:

- “How is your relationship to food?”
- “What is your relationship with eating like on a typical day?”
- “Have you ever dieted or tried to change your body in significant ways?”
- “Do you ever feel out of control around food, or very rigid with it?”
- “How do you feel about your body these days?”

*Tone matters as much as wording.  
Curiosity, warmth, and non-judgment  
help clients feel safer opening up.*



# Weight-Inclusive Language Shifts for Clinicians

- ✘ “Try to avoid unhealthy foods”
- ✔ “How does your body feel after eating different kinds of foods? What helps you feel satisfied and steady?”
- ✘ “Emotional eating is the problem”
- ✔ “Eating can be one way your nervous system tries to cope. Let’s get curious about what you might have been needing in that moment.”
- ✘ “Your BMI is in the normal range, so that’s good”
- ✔ “Numbers don’t tell the full story. I care more about how your body is functioning and how you’re feeling day to day.”
- ✘ “You don’t look like you have an eating disorder”
- ✔ “Eating disorders don’t have one look. If food or body thoughts are taking up a lot of space, that’s important.”
- ✘ “That’s just boredom eating”
- ✔ “I wonder what your body or emotions might have been asking for in that moment.”
- ✘ “Have you lost or gained weight recently?”
- ✔ “Have you noticed any changes in your appetite, eating patterns, or energy levels lately?”
- ✘ “You look healthier” (when weight changed)
- ✔ “I’m really glad you’re here today. How have you been feeling in your body this week?”

# Weight-Inclusive Language Shifts for Clinicians

- ✘ “That’s a lot of food” / “That doesn’t seem like enough”
- ✔ “How did that amount feel for you physically and emotionally?”
  
- ✘ “Let’s work on getting you to a healthier weight”
- ✔ “Let’s focus on helping your body feel more stable, nourished, and supported.”
  
- ✘ “Let’s burn off what you ate”
- ✔ “What kind of movement feels supportive or regulating for your body right now?”
  
- ✘ “At least you’re not overweight”
- ✔ “All bodies deserve care and respect. What matters most is how you’re feeling and functioning.”
  
- ✘ “You just need more willpower / balance”
- ✔ “It sounds like food feels really complicated right now. Let’s slow down and understand what’s happening.”
  
- ✘ “Good job being ‘good’ with food this week”
- ✔ “What did you notice about your eating experiences this week? Anything feel different or supportive?”
  
- ✘ “You should be careful not to gain weight”
- ✔ “Bodies naturally change over time. Our goal is helping yours feel cared for and nourished.”



# *Helpful vs. Harmful Therapist Moves*

## Helpful:

- Validate that body distress makes sense in a weight-stigmatizing culture
- Explore function of behaviors before trying to change them
- Support regular eating and adequate nourishment
- Stay within scope and refer to ED specialists when needed


## Potentially Harmful:

- Praising weight loss
- Encouraging dieting or food restriction
- Ignoring body image when it shows up
- Assuming someone in a larger body cannot have a restrictive eating disorder

## Helpful Language:

- Validating ambivalence about recovery
- Focusing on function, not weight
- Encouraging regular nourishment

## Harmful (But Common) Language

- “But you know this is unhealthy, right?”
  - Commenting on appearance changes
  - Suggesting diets, “clean eating,” or weight loss
- 



At Thrope Therapy, we understand how complex your relationship with food and body can be, because this work is about so much more than eating. Our therapists prioritize bringing their authenticity to each session. We offer:

- Intuitive eating counselors
- Anti-diet, weight-inclusive approach
- In-person eating disorder therapy in NYC
- Virtual therapy in NJ, MA, CT, and NY

**[Schedule a Consult at Thrope Therapy Here!](#)**