QUESTIONS ABOUT WEIGHT AND PERCEIVED WEIGHT

It may also be helpful to highlight the distinction between the client’s actual weight and his/her worries about the perceived weight.

“Do you think you’re fat at the moment? How can you tell that you’re fat? How do you think you look to me - do you think I see you as being very fat?”

“One of the characteristics of anorexia nervosa is that people who are actually extremely thin think of themselves as being fat, or having particularly fat body parts. I accept that you think of yourself as fat and that you feel fat, but in actual fact, to everybody else you look very thin. What do you think about that idea?”

“I’d like to suggest that part of the problem is that you’ve been dieting and thinking about your weight so intensely and for so long now that you can no longer be objective or impartial about your weight. You seem to view yourself as being fatter than you really are. How do you feel about this suggestion?”

“Another common characteristic of serious eating problems (or anorexia/bulimia nervosa if your client prefers to speak in such terms) is that people tend to think that everything will be OK once they’ve lost weight. However, when they get to their ideal weight they still feel fat and are unhappy with life, and so feel compelled to lose even more weight. How does this fit in with your dieting experiences?”

“What do you see as being the ideal solution to the problem?”

“The treatment for the type of eating problem you are currently experiencing involves more than just getting you to eat healthy meals and put on a bit of weight. Treatment also involves helping you change your attitudes and beliefs about what constitutes an ideal body and about what is ‘fat’ and what is ‘thin’. Another part of treatment will involve helping you sort out any problems you may have with other areas of your life, such as your goals for the future and your ability to assert yourself in ways other than through the use of food. How does all that sound to you?”

QUESTIONS FOR CLIENTS WITH BULIMIA NERVOSA:

In addition to the questions and statements above, the following may also be useful:

“What do you think makes you want to binge?”

“Why do you vomit (or purge, etc.)?”

“What do you think would happen to your weight if you stopped vomiting (or purging, etc.)?”