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Take Charge: Personality as Predictor of Recovery from Eating Disorder

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Abstract

Many treatments for eating disorders (ED) have demonstrated success. However, not all patients respond the same to interventions nor achieve full recovery, and obvious candidates like ED diagnosis and symptoms have generally failed to explain this variability. The current study investigated the predictive utility of personality for outcome in ED treatment. One hundred and thirty adult patients with bulimia nervosa or eating disorder not otherwise specified enrolled in an intensive multimodal treatment for 16 weeks. Personality was assessed with the NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO PI-R). Outcome was defined as recovered versus still ill and also as symptom score at termination with the Eating Disorder Inventory-2 (EDI-2). Personality significantly predicted both recovery (70% of patients) and symptom improvement. Patients who recovered reported significantly higher levels of Extraversion at baseline than the still ill, and Assertiveness emerged as the personality trait best predicting variance in outcome. This study indicates that personality might hold promise as predictor of recovery after treatment for ED. Future research might investigate if adding interventions to address personality features improves outcome for ED patients.

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