

Participant Information Sheet

Study title

An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the lived experiences of eating disorders (EDs) and eating disorders treatments in women with co-occurring mental health conditions and/or neurodivergent profiles

You are being invited to participate in this research study. To help you decide please find below information about the aim of the study and what it involves for participants. Please read the information carefully and take your time so that you can make an informed decision.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research investigates the lived experiences of having an eating disorder and the experience of treatment for an eating disorder in women with co-occurring mental health conditions and/or neurodivergent profiles. Little research has been undertaken to date to examine qualitatively (i.e. through interviews) the effects of co-occurring mental health conditions and/or neurodivergent profiles on the lived experiences of eating disorders and of treatment for that eating disorder. My hope is that the research findings will help mental health practitioners to better understand the experiences of eating disorders and treatment needs of women with co-occurring mental health conditions and/or neurodivergent profiles. The interview responses of the participants will be grouped anonymously into themes highlighting similarities and differences in experiences wherever such occur.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You are one of ten women who have been invited to participate in this study because you have experienced an eating disorder in the past. Additionally, you have been diagnosed with a co-occurring mental health condition and/or neurodivergent profile which you experienced at the same time as your eating disorder. If you have not recovered from your eating disorder for at least one full year, are not eighteen, have not had treatment for your eating disorder, or did not have a co-occurring mental health condition and/or neurodivergent profile during your eating disorder, please do not take part in this study.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If the interview takes place online you will have online access to the consent form presented at the end of this information sheet. If the interview takes place face-to-face you will be given this information sheet for you to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form on the day of the interview. If you decide to take part in this study you may withdraw your data from the study without negative consequences and without giving a reason up to the 11th of August 2025 (one month before the submission of the research report).

If you are a student at London South Bank University please know that participation in this study will not impact your grades, assessments or future studies.

What does taking part in the study involve?

I will interview you for between one hour to one hour thirty minutes either online or face-to-face on the topic of your lived experience with an eating disorder and your lived experience of having received treatment for your eating disorder. I will ask the same set of questions to all participants with the possibility of some follow-up questions during the interview. The interview has four parts: introduction; lived experience of ED; lived experience of treatment for ED; and your interpretations of those experiences.

What are the possible disadvantages/risks of taking part?

As this research topic is sensitive, you will have access to the list of questions prior to the interview so that you can decide whether you are comfortable answering these questions and whether you still want to take part in the study. If, during the interview a follow-up question is asked that you do not feel comfortable answering, you are free to tell me and will not be required provide an answer. If you start feeling overwhelmed, breaks can be taken during the interview, and the interview can be stopped at your request at any time. During the debriefing, resources for psychological support will be provided should you need support after the interview. The interview will take between one hour to one hour thirty minutes of your time (without remuneration) and may involve travel (at your own expense) to the location of the interview if you do not wish to do the interview online.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Some women with an eating disorder also have a single or multiple mental health conditions and/or neurodivergent profile. It is not yet well understood how these experiences are similar or different to those of women with different mental health conditions and/or neurodivergent profile. Likewise, treatment experiences for eating disorders of women with co-occurring mental health condition and/or neurodivergent profile have not been studied qualitatively. My hope is that your participation in this study, based on your lived experience of eating disorders, will lead to a better understanding among mental health professionals of what women with lived experience of eating disorders actually find useful in treatment as assessed subjectively by them and of the impact of co-occurring mental health condition and/or neurodivergent profile on experiences of eating disorders and their treatment.

Will the data collected in this study be kept confidential?

The data you provide will be anonymised as you will be referred to in the research report under a pseudonym and all personally identifiable information will not appear in the research report. The interview will be audio-recorded so that the data can be transcribed and analysed later on. This will be done by using an audio-recorder which will be safely stored in a locked cabinet. The transcribed data will be stored electronically on the researcher's password-protected hard drive indefinitely. The audio recording will be deleted as soon as the data is transcribed. The interviews will take place in confidential settings. Your personal information will only be accessed by me (the researcher) and my supervisor.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you want to take part in the study please contact me at: mccarto3@lsbu.ac.uk. I will send you the informed consent which you will have to sign and return to me either electronically or when meeting face-to-face.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The data you provided for this research will be used as part of my dissertation for my master's degree in mental health and clinical psychology and may be published publicly as a research article in the future. If you would like a copy of the completed report (published or unpublished), please contact me, and I will send it to you. Your personal data will have been anonymized and will be grouped with the data of the other participants in the analysis. Individual data will not be made available.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This study is conducted for educational purposes only as part of my degree requirements as an MSc Mental Health and Clinical Psychology student in the school of Applied and Health Sciences at London South Bank University.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Committee from London South Bank University.

Contact for Further Information

For further information please contact me Odile Mc Carthy (mccarto3@lsbu.ac.uk) or my supervisor Dr Jamie Smith-Spark (smithspi@lsbu.ac.uk). If you have concerns about how the study has been conducted, you can contact the Psychology Research Ethics Committee (psyethic@lsbu.ac.uk).

Thank you for your interest in this study and for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Researcher:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Odile Mc Carthy', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 13/07/2025