Dying to Be Thin

available from Resource Centre: VT 616.85 NOV

- many dancers **15% below average weight/height**
- anorexia = **deadliest of all psychiatric disorders/psychological illnesses**
- **1/2%** of people with anorexia die every year = **10%** in 20 years
- **8 million** people suffer from anorexia or bulimia
- anorexia **most difficult to treat**; **50%** of patients relapse within the first year
- low blood pressure, severe osteoporosis, kidney and liver damage, heart failure (Karen Carpenter died in 1983 at age 32; Heidi Gunther of the Boston Ballet died at age 22)
- anorexia **has increased 36% every 5 years since the 1950’s**
- **females aged 15 - 24** the most vulnerable
- idea that thin = love, success, glory, power
- 14th century mystic Catherine of Sienna starved herself to death at 33
- 19th century: not eating was for spiritual reasons i.e. to proved that a woman had conquered her “carnal appetites” (similar idea presented in Slim Hopes: that not eating was like not having sex)
- Twiggy - model in the 1960’s - 5’6”, 91 lbs
- **models today average 25% less normal weight/height of average American woman at 140 lbs**
- Plus-sized models becoming more popular
  - Kate Dillon was teased at a young age; by end of 7th grade lost 30-35 lbs and grew 4 inches
- **3 out of 100 girls develop anorexia/bulimia usually at the onset of puberty**
- anoretics/bulimics: 7% have some family history of anorexia or bulimia; 5 - 7% have some spectrum of eating disorders in the family
  - some experience early anxiety starting around age 8
- some common traits: obsessively perfectionistic, in control, harm avoidant behaviour, anxious, parent pleasers; existing vulnerability
- studies found high levels of **serotonin** (mood, appetite regulating hormone)
- history of sexual abuse common --> sense of powerlessness so eat/don’t eat in order to be in control, have power, be more attractive, or be less attractive
- not nearly as common in males but jockeys and body builders at risk
- low body weight results in low/no production of estrogen = periods stop and along with usually low/no calcium in diet, bone density is lost
- Erika Goodman who danced with the Joffrey Ballet developed severe osteoporosis and at age 54 can only walk with aid of a walker -- legs now deformed
- strenuous exercise, marathoners, obsessive workouts = type of anorexia (maybe brought on by anxiety, obsessive thoughts)
- Prozac/Paxil don’t usually work for anorectics because body weight is too low but have some effectiveness for bulimics and may help against relapse for anorectics
- **80% women** are dissatisfied with their body image
- **girls as young as 9 or 10 are dieting**
• bulimia - first recognized in 1979
• average onset of bulimia= 18 years old
• bulimics may be normal weight
• movies and literature often serve only to give methodology info for those to practice
• need cognitive behaviour therapy
• CCK = hormone that makes people feel full; empties from stomach and travels to brain; less CCK is released (or it travels to brain slower) in bulimics