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POSTOPERATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES IN BARIATRIC SURGERY

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While candidates for bariatric surgery are commonly required to have a preoperative psychological assessment, less emphasis is placed on assessing and treating the post-surgical behavioural issues which arise. International standards regarding postoperative care vary, and it is important to recognize the emotional impacts of dramatic weight loss. Issues to be addressed include the presence of disordered eating behaviour and how they may vary from typical maladaptive eating issues. The increased risk of substance use following bariatric procedures has received more attention in the research literature, but clinicians and patients alike often underestimate the potential impacts. Most significantly, alcohol use disorders deserve special focus as there is a growing body of evidence that such problems not only are more likely to surface postoperatively, but that the incidence seems to increase with time. Relational concerns arise following significant weight loss, not only in terms of the individual's expectations of others, but in terms of how others react to the dramatic changes seen in bariatric patients. This can lead to emotional distance which can disrupt friendships and even increase the risk of divorce. On a similar note, the relation with the self can be challenged, especially in terms of self-image, particularly when there is a mismatch between an internalized view and a changing external appearance, an issue magnified by the problem of excess skin. This talk will focus on the many emotional challenges faced by an individual with significant weight loss. Attendees will gain a better appreciation for the behavioural problems which may arise after successful bariatric surgery and ways to approach their treatment.

Biography

Paul Davidson serves as the Director of Behavioural Services at the Center for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. He obtained a BA in Psychology from Brandeis University and earned his PhD in Clinical Psychology at Brigham Young University. He completed an Adult Internship and Child/Adolescent Fellowship at the Cambridge Hospital/Harvard Medical School. He serves as the Chair of the Integrated Health Support Group Committee for ASMBS. He is an Instructor in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, has spoken internationally about bariatric topics. He has published in numerous journals, is an Associate Editor for the *Obesity Surgery* journal and a Reviewer for *Surgery for Obesity and Related Disorders*. He is passionate about his commitment to his patients, integrative care, and advancing behavioural medicine research.

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