

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF CONTROL
AND RECOVERY FROM ANOREXIA NERVOSA**

A dissertation submitted

by

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Abstract

A psychological sense of control has been implicated in the development and maintenance of anorexia nervosa. The paradoxical relationship the individual with anorexia has to psychological control mechanisms may lie at the heart of successful treatment and recovery from this complex syndrome. This study utilized Shapiro and Astin's (1998) Unifying Theory of Human Control as an integrative framework for understanding a sense of control as it relates to eating pathology. The foundation of the theory rests on the belief that the greatest human fear is losing control while the strongest motivation is to have a sense of control. The purpose of the study was to investigate psychological components of control that may contribute to successful recovery from anorexia nervosa. Findings from this study revealed that overall sense of control, positive sense of control, and a positive assertive mode of gaining control were significant predictors of recovery status. Results confirmed that individuals who have recovered from anorexia endorse feeling more in control of their environment and of themselves. Recovered individuals displayed higher levels of self-efficacy, and a greater belief in their ability to set and attain meaningful goals. Additionally, this study supported the idea that higher levels of positive assertive modes of control (including such beliefs as one's ability to actively alter or change the environment, self or others in a positive way) may contribute to recovery status. The findings from this study further our understanding of psychological sense of control as it relates to recovery from anorexia and narrative accounts provided by participants further elucidate the internal and external battles for control experienced as part of this complex syndrome.

Keywords: anorexia nervosa; psychological sense of control; recovery; Shapiro Control Inventory; Unifying Theory of Human Control