

Case Vignette: Emily

Name: Emily

Age: 16 years old

Gender: Female

Sport: Gymnastics

Level of Competition: County level, competing in national championships.

Position: All around (all apparatus)

Primary Goal: To be the very best gymnast that I can be, to strive for perfection.

Case Study.

Emily has been training as a gymnast since the age of 6 and currently competes at a high level, representing her region in national competitions. She comes from a family that places significant emphasis on achievement and perfection, particularly in her sport. Emily's parents are supportive but have high expectations for her success and physical appearance. Her mother was also a former gymnast, though she retired early due to an injury. In recent times, her coach has raised concerns regarding her eating habits and weight loss. She has exhibited signs of an eating disorder, including restrictive eating and an obsession with body image, particularly in relation to her performance in gymnastics. Emily has expressed fears of gaining weight and how that may negatively affect her athletic performance. Emily is noticeably becoming more withdrawn and less social, especially when it comes to team meals or social gatherings. Emily's performance has begun to suffer slightly due to fatigue, and one time she passed out before starting her floor routine which meant she had to withdraw from the competition. She has been increasingly preoccupied with her weight and body composition. Her gymnastic routines, which once showed grace and strength, now appear to lack energy and precision, which has also been noted by her teammates. Emily has drastically reduced her caloric intake, especially avoiding foods she perceives as "fattening" (e.g., carbohydrates, fats). She insists on eating alone. Despite already intense daily training, Emily continues to push herself, adding additional workouts or focusing on calorie-burning activities. Emily expresses dissatisfaction with her body, believing she is "too big" or "too heavy" for her sport, despite being within a healthy weight range. Emily has a strong desire to be perfect in her sport. She sets very high standards for herself and feels immense pressure to meet them. This perfectionism extends beyond her gymnastics performance and affects how she views herself in other areas of her life. Emily has a deep-seated fear of failure in both gymnastics and in meeting the expectations of her coach and family. Although Emily appears outwardly confident, she struggles with feelings of inadequacy, particularly when she doesn't meet her self-imposed standards. Her self-worth is heavily linked to her performance

and physical appearance. The gymnastic world, with its intense focus on body size and aesthetics, may exacerbate Emily's concerns about her weight. Her sport often emphasizes leanness and a "small" body type, which could contribute to her beliefs about what is necessary for success.

Emily's relationship with her family is marked by high expectations and achievement. Her mother is particularly influential, having been a former gymnast herself. Emily often feels the pressure to live up to her mother's legacy, although her mother has never directly imposed these standards. Her father is supportive but somewhat disengaged, and there is a general sense of competition in the household, with Emily striving to meet both parental expectations. Emily's BMI is within the normal range, but on the lower end for her age and height (Current height = 5 foot 2, Current weight 102 lbs). Emily has noticed some irregularity in her menstrual cycle, with periods becoming more sporadic. Emily is physically active, but her recent low energy levels and fatigue have been noted by her coach and teammates.