



# S I E R R A T U C S O N P R O G R E S S

## An Integrative Approach to Eating Disorders

- It is estimated that eating disorders affect 7 million women and 1 million men.\*
- Eighty-six percent of people with eating disorders report onset of illness by the age of 20.\*
- The death rate for eating disorders is higher than for any other psychiatric illness. It is estimated that 6 percent of serious cases die.\*

\*National Association of Anorexia Nervosa & Associated Disorders

Much research is done on the numbers, percentages, genders, ages, etc. of people diagnosed with eating disorders. What studies cannot convey is the deep emotional pain, turmoil, and fear that these people feel. At the root of these issues is a dissolution between the self and the body, either from early trauma or overwhelming life circumstances. To avoid the pain of expectations that cannot be met or emotions that are too painful to express, people often resort to using food as a way of maintaining some control over their lives or as a way to keep emotions from surfacing. Many who suffer from eating disorders also use other substances, relationships, or other compulsive behaviors in an attempt to numb their feelings.

***“Eating disorders are not about food, but about why people eat the food they do and the way they eat it,” states Dr. Carolyn Ross, Chief of Sierra Tucson’s Eating Disorders Program.***

Dr. Ross’s education and experience (see page 4) confirm that treating eating disorders effectively requires an approach that combines mindfulness, changing patterned behaviors, skills/resource teaching, and transitioning towards autonomy. With this approach, patients are educated about their eating disorder and its root cause(s); they participate in experiences that help heal these root causes; and then they are able to begin integrating their insight, knowledge, and experience in the service of their recovery. The Twelve Step Program serves as the philosophical underpinning of the integrative Eating Disorders Program. As with the Sierra Model® that Sierra Tucson developed and implemented, this approach treats the body, mind, and spirit to bring healing to the whole person.

Traditionally, treatment of eating disorders focuses on weight gain/loss and combines the use of conventional medicine

with Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Sierra Tucson offers much more. The core components of Sierra Tucson’s integrative approach to eating disorders includes:

- Nutrition Program
- Psychotherapy
- Exercise
- Psychometrics
- Pharmaceuticals
- Nutraceuticals
- Mind-Body Therapies
- Skills Training
- Family Program

Integrating therapies requires a high level of communication and team participation—an area of excellence for Sierra Tucson’s multidisciplinary staff. Each step of treatment builds upon another, and patients gain many different ways of viewing and healing their issues.

**Nutrition** - Dr. Ross uses a staged approach to the nutrition program, allowing patients to move from staff-monitoring to self-monitoring to integration into the broader Sierra Tucson community. “We try to shift the patient’s relationship with food from one of fear and control to one that is positive and life-affirming,” says Dr. Ross. “Cultivating mindfulness in every area, especially regarding food, helps patients discover that food is a restorative element. Food nourishes us so that we can go nourish others.” Traditional Chinese Medicine even uses specific foods to heal deficiencies or ailments. It is important that patients learn new ways of healthy eating. “Working with the dietitians, we have developed a nutrition program that successfully integrates use of the exchange system with other modalities, such as core foods, food challenges, and food-oriented experiences,” indicates Dr. Ross. “For example, nutrient-dense core foods are used to broaden the patients’ experience with a variety of healthy foods. This helps to break some of the ritualistic and controlling behaviors seen with eating disorder patients. And protein

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snacks before a meal have been shown to reduce binge eating.” Because many eating disorder patients are missing nutrients like zinc and B vitamins, supplements are given to restore these components. Enzymes and probiotics also enhance digestion and absorption of food. Dr. Ross and staff are careful to maintain important balances, e.g., fatty acids to absorb zinc and proper ratios of zinc to copper and calcium to magnesium.

**Psychotherapy** - Psychotherapy remains essential to find the root cause(s) of each person’s eating disorder. Through various therapies such as Group Process, Cognitive-Emotional-Behavioral Therapy (CEBT), Body Image Work, Psychodrama, and Equine-Assisted Therapy, patients gain insight into their family of origin, behaviors, body image, and how their moods affect what and how they eat.

**Exercise** - A nutrition/fitness specialist assesses all patients and confers with Dr. Ross regarding individual needs. There is evidence that exercise can help individuals get in touch with their physical body, and it can have a positive effect on mood. Patients learn about the role of exercise in dealing with their specific illness and find out what is healthy for them. Yoga, Qi Gong, and the Climbing Wall are all fitness experiences that help patients move beyond the tightly controlled patterns of exercise to which they are accustomed.

**Psychometrics** - Psychological testing is used to provide early identification of Axis I and II diagnoses. This valuable information is used to determine each person’s approach to treatment.

**Pharmaceuticals** - Most patients enter treatment taking multiple medications, which usually have both benefits and drawbacks. Sierra Tucson’s expert medical staff talk with and evaluate each patient to determine which medicines are necessary and helpful.

**Neutraceuticals** - Natural products can support and/or replace the use of medications. St. John’s Wort is an herb used to treat mild-to-moderate depression, and SAME can be effective in treating major depression. Each person is appraised individually for the best use of neutraceuticals and to avoid any herb-drug interactions. In many cases, these natural products contribute positive results with fewer side effects than antipsychotics and SSRIs.

**Mind-Body Therapies** - Restoring the mind-body connection is vital for those with eating disorders. This connection, usually fractured in eating disorder patients, is valuable for the body to communicate to the mind important cues, such as hunger and satiety. Research shows that mind-body medicine is effective in helping ADD and ADHD, insomnia, memory improvements after head trauma, panic disorder, and chronic pain, as well as eating disorders. Mind-body therapies include guided imagery; relaxation therapies (breath work, meditation, progressive muscle relaxation); and mindful practices for eating, exercising, and self-soothing. Dr. Ross reports that “women with bulimia who use guided imagery have a 74% reduction in binge eating and vomiting.” (Esplen, et al, 1998.) “Saying a prayer and affirming proper intentions before a meal can help change the reasons we eat and, therefore, the way we eat,” says Dr. Ross.

Mind-body techniques from the body side include Yoga, Tai Chi/ Qi Gong, and Zero Balancing. Acupuncture is used to treat depression, anxiety, insomnia, and other conditions during treatment. Swedish Massage is useful for relaxation, and Shiatsu Massage can help with gastrointestinal problems related to the eating disorder. Chiropractic is available for joint or muscle syndromes. When trauma is a factor, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) can provide significant

(Continued on page 3)

## Letter from the Executive Director David E. Anderson, Ph.D.

Dear Friends,

As many of you know, I love to collect good quotations, and it’s difficult for me to give a presentation or write an article without slipping in at least one or two good comments on the nature of life, whether they be from Homer or Homer Simpson. Giving in to my urge, then, I’d like to refer to the wise Spanish poet and author, Juan Ramon Jimenez, who said, “A permanent state of transition is man’s most noble condition.” If that be the case (and I know it to be true), then Sierra Tucson is one very noble company at the moment! Here’s why:

- We just completed a patient room expansion, increasing our licensed bed capacity from 87 to 91... with 4 additional beds becoming available near the end of the year.
- In early April, Sierra Tucson will begin the first of several major construction projects. The first phase will include new office and service provider space, several new group rooms, and a remodeled and expanded dining room area.

- The new Integrative Therapies Department is off and running as it “integrates” services such as acupuncture, Yoga, Swedish and Shiatsu Massage, Qi Gong, and “nutraceuticals” with more traditional forms of medicine and therapy.
- Several new staff are joining us in the medical, clinical, support, and administrative ranks. (This newsletter highlights just one of our recent additions, Dr. Carolyn Ross.)

In the nearly seven years that I’ve been here, it does seem to me that Sierra Tucson is always in a perpetual state of transition... and I wouldn’t want it to be any other way!

In this glorious springtime of new growth and creativity, we wish for you many good transitions, as well. And may we all be part of a truly noble community as we serve as agents *for* change and agents *of* change.



Sincerely,

*David E. Anderson, Ph.D.*

David E. Anderson, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

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- May 23-27 ♦ Couples in Recovery
- June 6-10 ♦ Renewal - Deepening Your Recovery
- June 13-17 ♦ Synergy & Balance
- June 20-24 ♦ Money, Values & Relationships
- July 18-22 ♦ Creating Healthier Families
- July 25-29 ♦ Midlife Renewal for Women
- August 15-19 ♦ Positive Potential
- August 29 - Sept. 2 ♦ Couples - Creating Intimacy
- September 19-23 ♦ Couples in Recovery
- September 26-30 ♦ Renewal - Deepening Your Recovery

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**2005 Scheduled Dates (call to request other dates):**  
May 16-20 • September 12-16 • November 7-11

(Continued from page 2 ~ An Integrative Approach to Eating Disorders)

healing. Somatic Experiencing® helps with emotional release of trauma and provides resources for dealing with sensations that trigger eating disorder behaviors. These therapies also provide adjunct or alternative methods to medications.

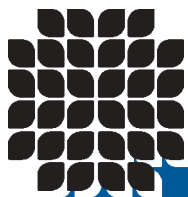
**Skills Training** - Teaching skills to maintain healthy thoughts/images, relaxation, and mindful practices helps patients to continue living in a healthy state of mind, with healthy behaviors, after leaving treatment. Patients are taught to integrate the insights they have gained into their daily life.

**Family Program** - Family therapy is a foundational part of all recovery at Sierra Tucson. This experience is key to the patient's progress and extends healing to the family. As family members communicate the deepest issues that keep them stuck in shame, guilt, or fear, their eyes are opened to see each other in a different

light. With new appreciation for each other, patients and family members can set boundaries and resolve their individual concerns.

Sierra Tucson's integrative approach brings people back in touch with the body, calms or stimulates the mind, removes emotional blocks, and strengthens the spirit. Illness can serve as a call to action. Individuals who are willing to begin their personal journey to healing can encounter *transformative* results! The information and experiences gained at Sierra Tucson's Eating Disorders Program empower people to grow and break old patterns... leading to the acceptance and freedom they have always wanted.

Note: The earlier that an individual with an eating disorder obtains treatment, the more swift the healing. If you are concerned about someone, please call Sierra Tucson's Intake Department at 1-800-842-4487 for confidential assistance. ■



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**P R O G R E S S**

*SPRING 2005*

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*Meet Carolyn Coker Ross, M.D., M.P.H.  
 Chief of Eating Disorders Program  
 Head of Integrative Therapies Department*

Dr. Carolyn Ross was named Chief of Sierra Tucson’s Eating Disorders Program in December 2004. She received her medical degree from the University of Michigan, finished residency in Preventive Medicine at Loma Linda University in California, and recently completed a two-year fellowship at Dr. Andrew Weil’s Program in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona. Dr. Ross has opened three women’s integrative medicine centers; developed “Naturally Fit,” an innovative weight management program; and served as medical director for The Rader Institute’s inpatient eating disorders program. Her awards and accomplishments are too numerous to list here, but you can read more on Sierra Tucson’s website.

Dr. Ross began directing Sierra Tucson’s Integrative Therapies Department in January 2005. Her expertise helps staff incorporate various integrative therapies into all of Sierra Tucson’s programs.

As the attending medical provider for eating disorder patients, Dr. Ross provides the admission physical and continues to meet with the patient at least once a week, frequently more often. She reviews any medications they are taking and spends time talking with them individually about their recovery. To educate eating disorder patients, Dr. Ross gives a series of lectures. These

cover the medical consequences of eating disorders, healthy coping skills, mind-body therapies/techniques, skills training, and the journey to recovery.

Dr. Ross meets with the entire multidisciplinary team (including the primary therapist, family therapist, registered dietitian, eating disorders technician, and fitness specialist) once a week and with smaller staffing groups twice a week to review the patients’ progress and treatment plan. “I like working with this team of professionals, who are so committed to their work,” states Dr. Ross.

From Dr. Ross’s viewpoint, Tucson’s “relaxed lifestyle” helps her balance a very full life. During personal time, she likes to read, ski, and hike in the desert. She has a 35-year-old son (and a granddaughter!) and a 12-year-old son. Her third son suffered from mental illness and has passed away; she credits him for her initial interest in helping people with mental and behavioral issues. “Now,” Dr. Ross comments, “I truly enjoy interacting with the patients and seeing them change, grow, and start on their road to recovery. I am gratified to see so many miraculous changes!”

