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EMOTIONAL PROCESSING IN EATING DISORDERS

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Background: Patients with eating disorders are reported to show emotional processing deficits compared to healthy controls.

Aim: To study and discuss the role of emotional processing in eating disorders.

Methods: Review of the literature.

Results: Several studies found a marked impairment in emotional processing in eating disorder patients. These emotion-processing deficits seem to be independent of affective symptoms. Different studies address different concepts as emotional awareness, alexithymia and facial or voice emotional recognition. The emotional processing and functioning of eating disorder patients highly impact their relational styles and behaviour.

Discussion: The literature suggests global emotion-processing deficits in eating disorders. The emotion-processing deficits in eating disorder patients may contribute to the poor interpersonal communication, lack of social cognition and lack of empathy frequently seen in these patients. It is extremely important a better understanding of these complex relationships as they can act as maintenance factors of the eating disorder, contributing to social isolation and therapeutic failure. The prognostic implications of these findings, as well as potential therapeutical interventions are topics valuable for future research in this area.