**Activity 3 (a)**

As a practice, read through Emma’s story below and think about what might have made her vulnerable to her eating disorder, the triggers and what factors have kept it going. Then look at the timeline. The vulnerability, triggering and maintaining factors have been put in as an example.

**Case example: Emma, aged 21, student**

Emma’s mum was quite plump and enjoyed cooking. She was always on a diet and called herself fat. Emma tended to compare herself with her older brother who was very academic. Emma was bright but she was always quite shy and lacking in confidence. She was bullied at school for being quiet and a bit geeky.

At 15 years old Emma started to miss school meals to avoid sitting on her own at lunchtime. Instead she would go and sit in the library or go for a walk until the next lesson. Emma started going running after school, which she enjoyed and it helped her to feel better about herself. She started to lose weight which she liked as it gave her a sense of achievement. She got compliments from people. She continued to reduce her eating further and increase her running further. Her mum was initially pleased but then became worried and started nagging Emma to eat more and go running less. Emma stuck to her guns and the weight loss continued.

When Emma went to University at age 19 she joined a running club. She went out drinking a few times, but she had problems making friends. She continued to restrict her eating to make herself feel in control. This usually ended up with her binge-eating. Emma would increase her running whenever she felt her weight had gone up or to make herself feel better. Over time it became difficult not to go running. She would run even when she did not feel well, the weather was bad, and she would miss social stuff because she couldn’t miss a run.

As she had cut down her food, she often felt tired and she started to binge-eat more often. Usually the amounts she ate were not very large, but it was still frightening for her to lose control so she stopped buying any food apart from Weight Watchers meals, low calorie foods, and fruit. She still binge-ate frequently, stealing other students’ food as they tended to have the foods she deprived herself of. If she binged on chocolate or biscuits she felt she had to vomit. Eventually, Emma realised that she was really struggling to keep up with her course and she was getting more and more lonely and depressed. She dropped out at the beginning of the second year and went back home to Mum.

Timeline: Historical review of the development of Emma’s eating disorder

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| AGE | EVENT/RELATIONSHIP/EXPERIENCE |
| Early school yearsLater school years /starting University. | **Vulnerability factors*** Mum was plump and overly concerned by weight and dieting, she was critical of her own size and regularly dieted.
* Emma felt inferior compared to her brother.
* Shy by nature and lacking in confidence.
* Bullied at school.

**Trigger*** Started missing meals.
* Started university.
* Lack of friends.

**Maintaining factors*** Positive comments from Mum.
* Restriction leads to preoccupation with food and feeling at risk of losing control.
* Restriction and hunger lead to binges.
* Vomiting exacerbates binge-eating and restriction.
* Feeling low: running to feel better.
* Lack of socialising.
 |

**Activity 3 (b)**

Try and develop a timeline for yourself. It may be helpful to write a short case history about yourself and then think about what might have made you vulnerable to your eating disorder, your triggers and the maintaining factors which have kept it going. Take this exercise to your therapist / clinician.

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| --- | --- |
| Age | Event/Relationship/Experience |
|  |  |