

INTRODUCTION

- Women who have undergone bariatric surgery may experience life-changing transitions both physically and psychosocially.
- Although there seems to be adequate postsurgical physical care following bariatric surgery, there is often a lack of psychosocial support for these patients.
- Many transitions a post bariatric woman experiences will affect her and her relationships with others.

PURPOSE

This phenomenological qualitative research study explored the lived experience of women transitioning in their interpersonal relationships post bariatric surgery.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Women account for 80% of those having weight loss surgery.
- As physical and psychosocial changes related to bariatric surgery are closely intertwined, it challenges healthcare providers to detect patients who are at risk of continuing psychosocial distress.
- Since bariatric surgery results in rapid changes in weight loss, creating a new body image, more qualitative research is needed to determine how to manage the complex psychosocial experiences that accompany this transformation process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Experiencing Transition Theory (Reedy & Blum, 2010)
- Transition is a central concept integral to the nursing care of bariatric patients.
 - Most transition experiences are the result of critical turning points of events.

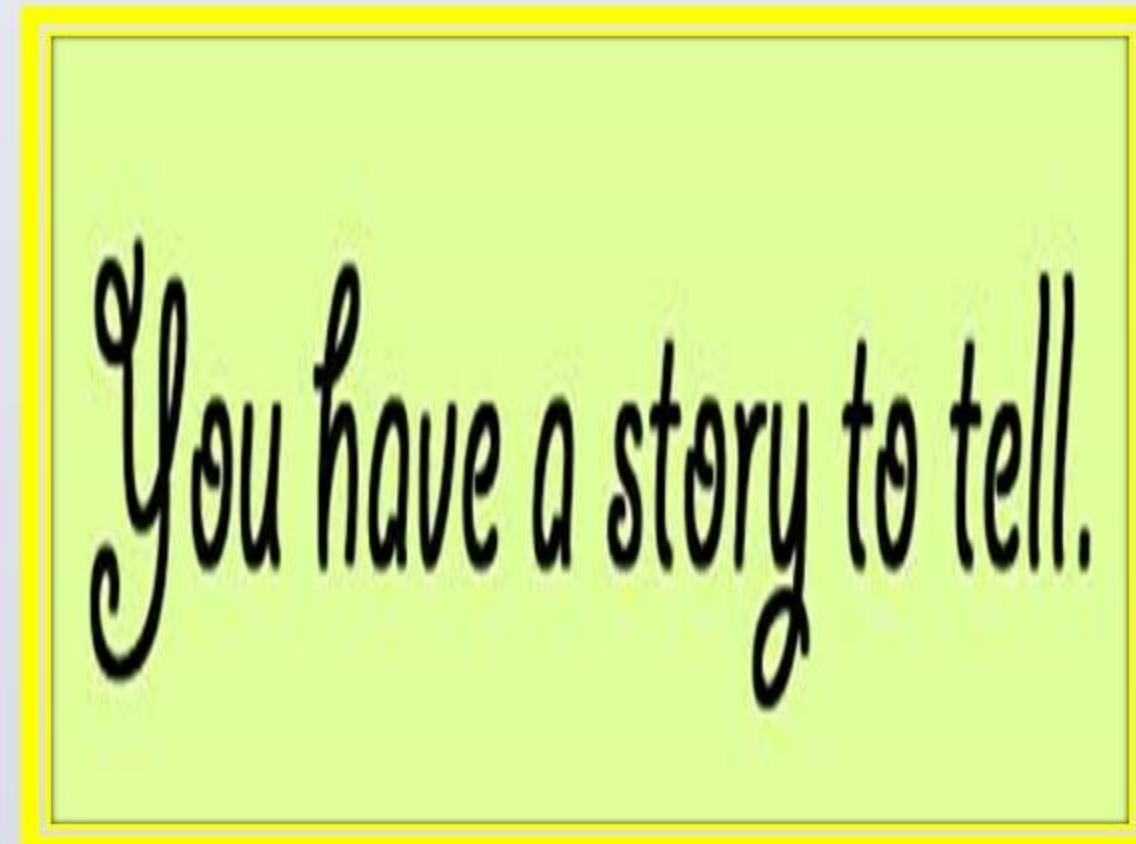


METHODS

- **DESIGN**
A semi-structured interview, with a list of four questions to be covered with each participant, encouraged women to tell their story in their own words, providing rich and in-depth data.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BARIATRIC RESEARCH STUDY

- *Can you describe what your family relationships were like during the first six months of having had your weight loss surgery?*
- *How would you describe the care your spouse and/or immediate family members gave you during your recovery period after your weight loss surgery?*
- *As a post bariatric patient adjusting to your new diet and physical transformation, from whom did you draw the most emotional support to help you through this?*
- *Can you describe any situation where you were surprised by the effect your weight loss transformation may have had on your relationships with the people in your life?*



SAMPLE AND SETTING

The principal investigator recruited respondents by attending the monthly Bariatric Support Group meetings. Interviews were audio taped and conducted in a private setting .

Inclusion criteria included women:

- between the ages of 18 and 60 years
- that were 6-12 months post bariatric surgery
- that had a gastric sleeve or Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery
- that were English-speaking

Exclusion criteria included women with

- gastric lap band surgery
- major post surgical complications (requiring hospitalization and medical intervention)

The sample size was comprised of six women who were good informants and could effectively reflect and communicate about their post bariatric experience. Sampling ended when data saturation was reached.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents	Age	# months post bariatric surgery	Type of bariatric surgery	Marital status	Ethnicity	Highest level of education	Employment status
Respondent 1	42	8 months	Gastric sleeve	Married	White	Other	Employed FT
Respondent 2	44	6 months	Gastric sleeve	Divorced	Black/African American	College/University	Employed FT
Respondent 3	39	8 months	Gastric sleeve	Single	White	College/University	Employed FT
Respondent 4	57	10 months	Gastric sleeve	Married	White	High School	Employed FT
Respondent 5	39	8 months	Gastric sleeve	Single	Hispanic/Latino	College/University	Employed FT
Respondent 6	41	7 months	Gastric sleeve	Single	White	College/University	Employed FT

Average age of respondent = 43.66 (44) years old
 Average # of months post bariatric surgery = 7.83 (8) months
 50% of respondents were single, 33% of respondents were married
 67% of respondents had college/university education

DATA ANALYSIS

- Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method. The six phases included:
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data
 2. Generating initial codes
 3. Searching for themes
 4. Reviewing themes
 5. Defining and naming themes
 6. Producing the report

FINDINGS: THEMES/THEME CLUSTERS

- **EXPERIENCING SUPPORT/NEGATIVITY**
 - Supportive Family, Friends and Coworkers
 - Significance of Bariatric Support Group
 - Social Media Support
 - Relationship Adjustments
 - Misinformation
- **CONNECTING SOCIALLY**
 - Adjusting Eating Patterns
 - Men and Dating
- **INSPIRING OTHERS**
- **EMBRACING A NEW SELF**
 - Loving Myself
 - Gaining Emotional Strength
 - Staying In the Fight
 - Feeling Alive Again

CONCLUSIONS

- To ensure bariatric surgery patients receive ample postoperative support from family and friends, it is important to inform those they trust, prior to surgery, with their plan for surgery and potential needs after.
- Attending bariatric support group meetings *before*, as well as after bariatric surgery, is conducive to gaining peer support, encouragement and helpful information to aid in the weight loss journey.
- Social media serves as an important vehicle for recovery and support for bariatric patients.
- Post bariatric women can successfully adjust to dining out.
- Within the first year post bariatric surgery, women will begin to gain emotional strength and "feel alive again".

NURSING IMPLICATIONS

- Nurses can implement a support group mentorship pairing program between pre-bariatric women and motivated women who are six months or more post-bariatric surgery. This can help foster adequate emotional support throughout the bariatric surgery journey for both.
- Nurses can encourage women to attend support group meetings, which is an essential part of the post bariatric woman's weight loss journey.

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