

WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT HAS AN EATING DISORDER

1-Have patience

Anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating can take a long time to resolve. Tell the person you will not force them to do anything they do not want to do. Recovery IS possible.

2-Support them

Let them know you are aware of what's happening and that you care. Listen and allow them to express their feelings. Be prepared that the individual may deny problems, react with hostility or may insist that they do not want to get better. Mood swings are common.

3-Avoid discussing weight, shape, fatness, and food

This adds to their fears. Focus on feelings, non-food and non-appearance related activities. Try to be conscious of the words you use to describe foods ('good' or 'bad' for me etc) and how you talk about their looks. Focus on health and inner strength.

4- Keep working on your relationship with them

Don't give up, it is very difficult to lose a family member or friend to destructive weight preoccupation activities. Although the person may push you away, know that your support is critical for their journey to recovery.

5-Stay informed

Try to find out about local eating disorder programs for your loved one and for yourself. Often there are programs tailored to supporting the family/friends through their own journey also. Search out many options and find the ones that work best for your loved one and/or your family.

6-Be realistic

Although you can support them and love them, realize that you cannot take on the role of a therapist and you cannot 'fix' this for them. They have to take responsibility for changes and it will happen when they are ready.

7-Be Self Aware

Examine your own attitudes about body images, dieting and self esteem. As a support for them you are a great role model for a healthy lifestyle.

8-Decrease your own stress levels

It is crucial for you to find a way to decrease your own stress in order to maintain your health. Try to find something that will work for you (Yoga, walking, music, etc) and take some time for yourself regularly.

9-Don't place blame

There are many factors that can contribute to disordered eating, and each individual is different. Blame (towards yourself or them) creates distance and reinforces a sense of failure.

10- Walk the journey with them

Eating disorder recovery can take a long time to achieve. Early interventions of working with a family doctor and treatment programs increase the likelihood of a faster recovery with fewer relapses. Maintain the hope that it is possible for your loved one.