

How to Help a Friend

DO

- Learn about eating disorders so that you will know the signs.
- Become aware of local resources available.
- Talk to your friend in a confidential, calm, and caring way.
 - Be specific about what you see, and use "I" statements to share your concerns. ("I'm concerned about you because you refuse to eat breakfast and lunch and keep saying you're lightheaded.")
 - Focus on your concerns about your friend's health and well-being, not on her weight or appearance. ("I've noticed that you are tired and sad all the time and haven't been eating much.")
 - Explain how the problem is affecting you and your relationship. ("It makes me afraid to hear you vomiting." "It's hard to be your friend when you're always worrying about your weight/diet.")
 - Share your own struggles; be open and real.
 - Give him hope that with help and patience he can free himself from this disorder and be happy again.
 - Offer a written list of professional resources for help.
- Be supportive and available when she needs someone. Listen to her with understanding, respect, and sensitivity.
- Expect denial. People with eating disorders often insist that they do not need help. By sharing your concern, you are planting a seed, which may help the person come to you later.
- Know your limits. You cannot force someone to change his/her behavior or to seek help. Talk to a professional about your concerns.

DON'T

- Take any action alone. You should get help.
- Try to solve his problem for him. He needs a qualified person.
- Be afraid to upset her. You should talk with her.
- Blame him for doing something wrong or tell him he is acting crazy.
- Give her simple solutions. ("If you'd just stop this ridiculous behavior, everything would be fine!")
- Gossip about him.
- Follow her around to check her eating/purging behaviors. This can make her feel resentful or powerless and actually slow the recovery process.
- Reject or ignore him. He needs you.
- Be deceived by her excuses.