

How to Help Your Child With An Eating Disorder

DO

- Learn about eating disorders so that you will know the signs.
- Become aware of local resources available.
- Talk to your child 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 haven't been eating breakfast or dinner and keep saying you're lightheaded." "I've noticed that you weigh yourself every day and make a lot of negative comments about your body.")
 - Focus on your concerns about your child'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 going out with your friends as much.")
 - Explain how the problem is affecting you and your family. ("It makes me afraid to hear you vomiting." "It makes us sad that you won't participate in family dinners and special events." "It's frustrating for the family when large amounts of food suddenly disappear.")
 - Share your own struggles; be open and real.
 - Give your child hope that with help and patience he can be free from this disorder and be happy again.
- Be supportive and available when he/she needs someone. Listen to your child with understanding, respect, and sensitivity.
- Expect denial. People with eating disorders often insist that they do not need help. But, they do. Get your child into treatment.
- Get support for yourself. Having a child with an eating disorder is incredibly stressful and scary. Talk with a professional about your own feelings and concerns.
- Be patient. Recovery takes a long time.

DON'T

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