

How to Help a Friend with an Eating Disorder

What to 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 his or 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 her hope** that with help and patience she can be freed from this disorder and be happy again.
 - Offer a written list of **professional resources** for help.
- Be supportive and available when he or she needs someone. Listen 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.



What not to do

- Don't take any action alone. You should get help from a professional.
- Don't try to solve her problem for him or her. He or she needs a qualified person.
- Don't be afraid to upset your friend. You should talk with him or her.
- Don't blame them for doing something wrong.
- Don't give simple solutions. ("If you'd just stop this ridiculous behavior, everything would be fine!")
- Don't gossip about your friend.
- Don't follow them around to check on eating/purging behaviors. This can lead to feelings of resentment or powerlessness and actually slow the recovery process.
- Don't reject or ignore your friend. They need you.
- Don't be deceived by your friend's excuses.