

YOU ARE A GREAT FRIEND!

If you are reading this brochure, then chances are you're concerned about the eating habits, weight, or body image of someone you care about.

We understand that this can be a very difficult and scary time for you as a friend or family member of someone struggling with an eating disorder. You may be feeling afraid, angry, and helpless. *These feelings are natural!*

You are doing the right thing by looking for information and learning about eating disorders! It is a *very good idea* to gather information to help you figure out what to do next.

The majority of individuals with eating disorders are female. However, males are now increasingly dealing with the same eating and weight concerns. In fact, because eating disorders are so often seen as a "female" issue, it may be even more difficult for males to ask for help or admit their concerns.

Whether you are worried about a female or male friend, this brochure will give you some helpful background information and some suggestions on *what to do, what to say, and where to go for help* if you are worried about someone you care about.

WARNING SIGNS

- Has your friend lost or gained a significant amount of weight recently?
- Does she avoid eating meals or snacks when you are together?
- Does he categorize food into "good foods" or "bad foods"?
- Does she calculate the number of fat grams and calories in each bite?
- Does he talk or worry about his size and shape?
- Does she weigh herself often?
- Does they exercise out of guilt or to lose weight instead of for their health and enjoyment?

If you answered "yes" to some of these questions, your friend *could* be struggling with, or on their way to, an *eating disorder*.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

Learn as much as you can about eating disorders. Read books, articles, brochures, and check out our website at www.NationalEatingDisorders.org.

Know the difference between facts and myths about nutrition and exercise. Knowing the facts will help you reason against inaccuracies that your friend may be using as excuses to maintain her disordered eating patterns.

Be honest. Talk openly and honestly about your concerns with the person who is struggling with eating or body image issues. Avoiding or ignoring it won't help!

Be caring, but be firm. Caring about your friend does not mean being manipulated by them. Your friend must be responsible for his/her actions and their consequences.

Tell someone. Share this brochure with them. It may seem very difficult to know when, if at all, to tell someone else about your concerns. Addressing body image or eating problems in their beginning stages probably offers your friend the best chance for working through them and becoming healthy. Don't wait until the situation is so severe that your friend's life is in danger. Consider telling their parents, a teacher, a doctor, a counselor, a nutritionist, or any trusted adult. They need as much support and understanding as possible from the people in their life.

At least 5-10 million girls and women and 1 million boys and men in the United States are struggling with eating disorders.

This means there are *lots* of people out there who understand what you are going through and are eager to help you *and* your friend!

EATING DISORDER VS. DISORDERED EATING: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The term "EATING DISORDER" may be used for three different conditions:

ANOREXIA: Self-starvation and refusal to eat or maintain weight at a healthy or normal level for one's age, size, height, and activity level. Intense fear of being fat in spite of excessive weight loss.

BULIMIA: Cycles of binge eating and purging (eating large amounts of food-more than most people would eat in one meal-in short periods of time, then attempting to get rid of the food through vomiting, laxative use, or over-exercising).

BINGE EATING/COMPULSIVE OVEREATING: Eating large amounts of food in a short amount of time. Impulsive or continuous overeating.

Eating disorders are serious, even life-threatening, health conditions.

Eating disorders are complex physical, emotional, and psychological conditions. For some, an eating disorder is a dangerous attempt to cope with or avoid events or feelings in life. It may be a way for a person to try to feel control or to feel nothing at all. Someone struggling with an eating disorder may be trying to distract or numb herself from pain or fear.

Even if your friend doesn't fit one of the clinical descriptions above, they may be wrapped up in **Disordered Eating**. Disordered eating means that a person's attitudes about food, weight, and their body are causing them to have very strict eating and exercise habits that jeopardize their *health, happiness, and safety*.

Disordered Eating may begin as a way to lose a few pounds or get in shape, but these behaviors can quickly get out of control, can become obsessions, and may even turn into a full-blown **Eating Disorder**.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

If you are worried about your friend's eating behaviors or attitudes, then it is appropriate for you to express your concerns in a loving, supportive way. It is important to handle these issues with *honesty* and *respect*. It is also important to discuss your worries early on, rather than waiting until your friend has endured many of the damaging physical and emotional effects of eating disorders.

Because your friend's *health* or even their *life* may be in *danger*, it is important not to keep this a secret for fear of making your friend angry or getting them in trouble. Other people in their life need to know so that they can encourage them to acknowledge their problem and get help. If your friend is under 18, their parents need to know immediately.

In a *calm* and *caring* way, talk to your friend about specific things you see or feel. Share your memories of two or three times when you felt concerned, afraid, or uneasy because of their eating or exercise rituals. Talk about the feelings you experienced as a result of these events. Try to do this in a very supportive, non-confrontational way.

Here are three suggestions:

1. **Use "I" statements.** (*I'm concerned about you because you refuse to eat breakfast or lunch. It makes me afraid to hear you vomiting.*)
2. **Avoid accusational "You" statements.** (*You have to eat something! You must be crazy! You're out of control!*)
3. **Avoid giving simple solutions.** (*If you'd just stop everything would be fine!*)

WHAT IF THEY WON'T LISTEN?

If your friend has become obsessed with eating, exercising, or their weight, they probably need professional help. They may be angry that you question their attitudes and behaviors, or they may deny that there's a problem. If they won't listen, you should tell someone who will listen, someone who can help.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP PREVENT EATING DISORDERS?

Here are some ways you can help promote healthy body image and remind yourself and others that self-esteem should never be weighed in pounds on a scale:

- ☆ Consider and be aware of the ways your beliefs and attitudes about your body and others' bodies are influenced by our society and culture.
- ☆ Be a good role model in your attitudes about food, body image, and weight-related issues. Avoid making negative comments about your body or anyone else's. Remember that your comments impact others even when you may not intend them to.
- ☆ Take good care of yourself. This includes eating well, getting plenty of rest, enjoying exercise, and interacting with people you love and enjoy being with. Maybe even talking to a counselor about your worries.
- ☆ Talk to others about the natural differences in body types. Avoid fighting your body's efforts to maintain its natural shape and weight.
- ☆ Learn about and tell family and friends about the dangers of dieting, the importance of eating a variety of foods, and enjoying moderate exercise to feel healthy and strong. Avoid overemphasizing a person's appearance.
- ☆ Do and say whatever you can to support and encourage the self-esteem and self-respect of your friends, family, classmates, teammates, and roommates -- in personal, social, athletic, and intellectual endeavors. Offer both males and females the same opportunities and encouragement!



Congratulations!

You are doing a wonderful thing by learning more about eating disorders, talking honestly with your friend about your concerns, and supporting your friend in seeking help.

Way to go!

REMEMBER:

You cannot force someone to seek help, change their habits, or adjust their attitudes. You will help your friend by honestly sharing your concerns, providing support, and knowing where to go for more information!

Your friend's recovery process is *her* responsibility. You cannot fix this for her. Also, people struggling with anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating disorder need professional help. It is recommended that treatment should include some combination of care from a nutritionist, a medical doctor, a counselor or psychiatrist, and possibly a support group.

There is help available
and there is hope!

For more information,
call our toll-free Information and Referral Line:

1-800-931-2237

Our Mission:

The National Eating Disorders Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the elimination of eating disorders and body dissatisfaction through prevention efforts, education, referral and support services, advocacy, training, and research.

For more information or to order additional brochures, please contact:



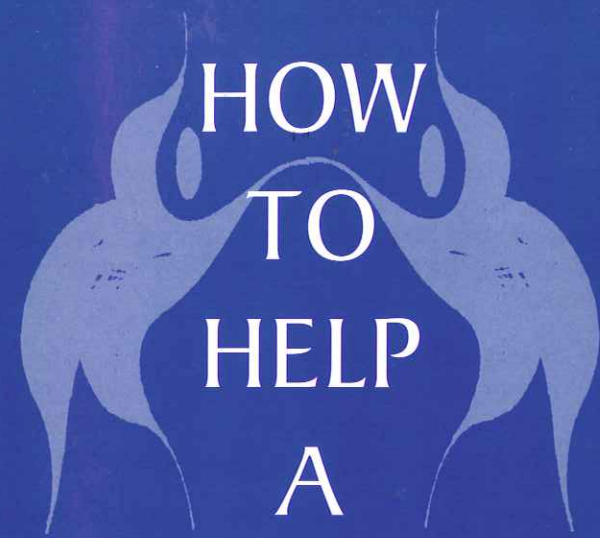
National Eating Disorders Association

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FRIEND

WITH EATING & BODY IMAGE ISSUES



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