



Talking About Your Eating Disorder

Recovery Kit

Anorexia Nervosa

Binge Eating Disorder

Bulimia Nervosa

Negative Body Image

***Guidelines For Talking
About Your Eating
Disorder***

The Dangers of Dieting

*Treatment For An Eating
Disorder*

*What Causes An Eating
Disorder*



Guidelines For Talking About Your Eating Disorder

Most of the time, we read about how people can approach someone they are worried may have an eating disorder. We tend to ignore how to help people who have an eating disorder talk about it. This is a common struggle. How do you explain what is going on? How do you let people know what you need as you fight your eating disorder? This can be confusing and overwhelming, as people are afraid of being misunderstood or judged.

- ◆ Approach the topic when you are comfortable. It is important to talk about your eating disorder when you are ready, with people you are comfortable with and want to talk to.
- ◆ Be honest about your experience; let people know what types of things are helpful or potentially harmful for you.
 - » Requesting people not talk about their diet in front of you.
 - » Ask others not to ask about what you ate that day. (This may not apply to some family based therapies!)
- ◆ Learning to be honest and assertive about your needs is an important skill that will assist you throughout your recovery and beyond.
- ◆ You may have to educate people about eating disorders.
 - » Unfortunately, many myths and misconceptions about eating disorders remain.
 - » As difficult as it may be, even the most well meaning person may occasionally misunderstand an aspect of your eating disorder.
 - » Don't be afraid to take time to educate them, or direct them to books, web sites or articles that may help them.
 - » People may not ask for fear of saying the wrong thing. This does not necessarily mean they don't care.



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- ◆ Talking about your eating disorder is something that is in your control. You can talk about it when and with who you would like.
 - » Setting personal guidelines on this issue takes anxiety and “guess work” out of social situations, such as worrying what types of comments people may make or questions they may ask.

What do I do if someone I know has an eating disorder?

This is one of the most commonly asked questions, and probably one of the hardest to answer. Treatment and recovery are ultimately up to the individual. Getting help for an eating disorder can often be a difficult and scary first step for the individual suffering, one often met with resistance. Therefore, it is important to know that recovery can be a long process. Caring for someone with an eating disorder requires patience. It is important for individuals affected by another’s eating disorder to find their own support networks, and find ways of caring for themselves too.

Ways to help

- ◆ Address your concerns in a confidential, safe environment. Be open and direct in an emphatic and non confrontational way. Let them know what you have seen and how it makes you feel.
 - » Example: “I am worried because I notice you go to the bathroom after meals. I am concerned you may be harming yourself.”
 - » Listen to their responses and what they say. Let them know their responses are important to you.
- ◆ Educate yourself. Know the signs and symptoms of eating disorders and most importantly the causes.
- ◆ Be familiar with available treatment options in the area. Suggest they make an appointment. Offer to be present when they make the first call. If the person is a minor, tell their parents or a trusted adult about your concerns.



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- ◆ Remind yourself the eating disorder is not a choice. It is not something your loved one is intentionally doing to self harm, gain attention, or hurt you. Rather, they are suffering from a psychological illness.
- ◆ Be careful about the comments you make about food and weight.
 - » Comments such as “You look thin” will be perceived as good. “You look like you have gained weight” will be seen as bad.
 - » Celebrate internal qualities and talents rather than physical appearance.
- ◆ Avoid talking about sizes, calories, fat grams and diet plans.
- ◆ Avoid comments about others weight and body shape.
- ◆ Avoid trying to “fix” the situation. Instead, offer to listen and be supportive.
- ◆ Do not make comments such as “If you would just eat.”
- ◆ Avoid power struggles about food.
- ◆ Do not comment on your loved ones food choices or eating patterns.
- ◆ Remind your loved one that you are there to help. Ask what is helpful and what they would like you to do or how they would like certain situations handled.
 - » Do not avoid the topic of the eating disorder for fear of saying the wrong thing. Just ask what is most comfortable for them.
- ◆ **Remember, recovery is possible!**