

EATING DISORDER TREATMENTS

*How to Speak to a Person You Think May Have an Eating Disorder**

- Focus on feelings and relationships- Pick a time when he or she feels comfortable to meet and a place where the discussion can be private. Emphasize your feelings and that you are genuinely concerned for his or her well-being. Explain you think these signs are a problem that may need to be addressed by professional help.
- Do not comment on how they look – people with eating disorders are already well aware of their bodies. Compliments only reinforce the obsession with his or her weight and trying to be thin. Avoid saying things like, “You look so skinny!”
- Make sure you do not convey any fat prejudice – If they say they feel fat or want to lose weight, don’t say “You are not fat”.
- Avoid power struggles about eating – Do not demand that they change. Do not criticize their eating habits. People with eating disorders are trying to be in control. They often do not feel control in their life.
- Avoid placing blame, shame, or guilt – as with any confrontation avoid using accusatory language such as “You” versus “I”. Instead of saying “You need to eat”, say, “I am concerned that you refused to eat breakfast or lunch.”
- Avoid giving simple solutions – “If you would just start eating, everything would be fine.”

*Tips to parents with children/adolescents who have eating disorders**

- Examine your own attitudes about food. Think about the way you feel about your own body weight and image and what you may be portraying to your child.
- Stay involved in the tasks of diabetes management in a developmentally appropriate way. Approach diabetes management as a family team.
- Avoid threats or scare tactics. Eating disorders often represent emotional stress and an attempt to manage that stress. Negative communication will only make it worse.
- Set caring and consistent limits with your child. Have a plan of how you will react when they refuse to eat or get angry when someone eats their “special” food.

- Remain firm. Remember how serious eating disorders can be and stay attuned with your child. If there is a health concern, you may have to force them to go to the doctor or hospital.
- Promote self-esteem. Provide positive comments on his or her achievements, skills, good behavior. Do not comment on how they look.
- Promote healthy stress relief. Discuss positive ways to relieve stress or handle loneliness, depression, anxiety, and self-hatred.

Team Effort

Caring for an eating disorder patient is a team effort. Most successful programs involve multiple healthcare providers and support teams. See the following for outside help.

Therapy – individual or group therapy is one of the most important forms of treatment for a person with an eating disorder. This will help him or her explore feelings underlying the eating disorder and improve self-esteem. He or she will also learn healthy behaviors on how to respond to stress and emotional pain.

Nutrition Counseling – Seeing a registered dietitian is also helpful in designing meal plans and dietary goals in order for the person to achieve a healthy weight.

Support Groups – Attending a support group can help the person see others who have suffered from eating disorders and learn about their success stories. This will also help him or her feel less isolated and alone. Family will also benefit from attending to learn more about eating disorders and how to better support their loved one.

Residential Treatment –in-patient psychiatric care may be required for more severe physical or behavioral problems.

Please see below for other references and support:

www.eatingdisorders.org.nz/fileadmin/clients/eatingdisorders/pdf/
http://teenshealth.org/teen/your_mind/friends/friend_eating_disorder.html

**Adapted from: National Eating Disorder: Information Center and National Eating Disorders Association and HelpGuide.org.*