



Support Guidelines for Families & Friends

DO's

DO acknowledge this is a long-term illness

DO realize there is not a quick and easy solution

DO talk to the individual about your concerns, ask questions and listen

DO express your feelings honestly with the individual; they sense how you are feeling anyway

DO genuinely let the individual know qualities/characteristics (other than physical) you appreciate about them

DO plan social activities which do not involve food

DO empower the individual to make their own decisions and be accountable for their decisions

DO allow the individual to be in charge of their routines of daily life, realizing that by giving up control you're setting the stage for the individual to develop health self-control

DO encourage the individual to get professional assessment from a practitioner experienced in eating disorders

DO realize the individual is ambivalent about getting well

DO realize the individual takes comfort and feels safe in the control and rituals of the disorder without commenting on it

DO express concern and interest in seeing the person getting well

DO inform yourself about the disorder and their treatment, attend support groups and read current literature

DO realize eating disorders are hardly ever just about food

DO realize that lying is a result of shame and a part of the eating disorder; the individual may deeply regret not being honest

DO realize that after a meal is especially stressful; it can help to talk about the meal

DO express gratitude for each other

DO model normal eating behavior

DON'T's

DON'T ever give up; this is a long-term illness and people recover daily. Know to let go and let them be responsible. The person has to want recovery for themselves or it will not work. Going into treatment to "please" or "pacify" family members does not work

DON'T ignore the problem and hope it will go away; talk about it. Set boundaries about when to intervene.

DON'T skip meals or talk about being on a diet

DON'T panic; seek the appropriate support you need

DON'T assume there isn't a problem if the individual doesn't show physical symptoms

DON'T force the person to eat or tell them to "just eat", but be there to support them emotionally

DON'T make your love a condition of the individual's appearance, health, weight, achievements or any other attribute

DON'T comment positively or negatively on appearance or weight

DON'T feel you must walk on eggshells so the person with the eating disorder won't be upset

DON'T let the eating disorder disrupt family routines

DON'T be manipulative. Be direct with feelings and expectations

DON'T try to control the person's behavior, as it can intensify the problem

DON'T talk about what they are eating without their permission

DON'T impose rules except those which are necessary for the individual's or family's safety and well-being. Avoid power struggles

DON'T comment about weight gained or lost

DON'T expect yourself to be a perfect parent, family member or friend

DON'T treat the individual differently with meals and food.
