



The Emily Program

Dilemmas for Women in Relationship with Someone with an Eating Disorder

Dilemma	Characteristics	Healthy Responses
The Disease	Irrational Unpredictable Cunning, baffling, powerful Stubborn Clever/Devious Unfair & Unjust	Acceptance Self-Care Loving Detachment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral & empathic response to high stimulus
The Wiring	The ED brain is different Some things we can never understand about it Some things' it can never understand about us Frustration	Acceptance Patience Loving Detachment
Communicating	Silence, reaction, aggression, punishment Alexithymia: difficulty understanding, processing and describing emotions	Fellowship Action/assertiveness Increased Emotional Literacy
Provider/Protector Roles	Desire to "Fix" it or make it go away- urge for tools, strategies, rules, authority, certainty, closure, and/or denial Limited conceptions of provide & protect Damned if I do, damned if I don't Feeling incompetent/impotent	Broaden definitions Family services Self-Care Acceptance Compassion & understanding the "process"
Relationship changed without my input	Grief over loss/shift in relationship Frustration "I didn't sign up for this!" Unfair & Unjust Bargaining Damned if I do, damned if I don't	Fellowship Self-Care Acceptance Differentiation between the person and the ED
Defining Progress, Success & Recovery	Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disease/symptom disappearance • return to "before" or "normal" • change will be visible/obvious • there is an end point • we can force or time recovery Frustration Feelings of failure	Recognizing, trusting, & valuing "small victories" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive change • > Food flexibility • < Self worth ties to weight, shape, eating Self-Care Acceptance

© The Emily Program