



The Emily Program

Tips for Supporting Your Loved One

It can be difficult to know how to approach someone struggling with eating disorder symptoms. You may worry that you won't "do it right." However, you are important to her/him and her/his recovery. The following tips may help you keep perspective and provide needed support to your loved one:

1. Remember, you didn't cause the eating disorder.
2. Accept your limitations; e.g. you can't make her/him want to get better.
3. Accept the person for who she/he is. Remember that she/he is an individual; she/he is not her/his eating disorder.
4. Be sensitive and be firm.
5. Compliment strengths that have nothing to do with appearance, eating, or food.
6. Seek support for yourself.
7. Respect how and where your loved one wants her/his eating disorder discussed. You absolutely need and deserve support, and you can get it while also honoring her/his need for confidentiality.
8. Ask your loved one how you can support her/his meal plan.
9. Plan non-food related activities for the times right after meals, to help redirect attention and energy.
10. As much as possible, try to focus on the other things life—not just discussions of weight, eating, exercise, and food.
11. Be a good role model when discussing food, body, and weight—your own and other people's.
12. Set an example: participate in family therapy (if recommended), talk openly about your feelings, and actively identify and resolve problems.
13. You can listen to your loved one; she/he needs to speak for herself/himself.
14. Convey that you believe in her/him.
15. Know your health insurance because you'll probably need to advocate for coverage.
16. Recognize that recovery is a process. It takes time; it's seldom logical or linear.
17. Know that your support is very valuable to your loved one!