

9 Truths About Eating Disorders

from the IAEDP (International Association of Eating Disorder Professionals)

Many people with eating disorders look healthy yet may be extremely ill.

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Families are not to blame and can be the patients' and providers' best allies in treatment.



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An eating disorder diagnosis is a health crisis that disrupts personal and family functioning.



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Eating disorders are not choices, but serious biologically influenced illnesses.



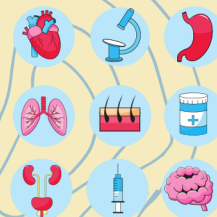
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Eating disorders affect people of all genders, ages, races, ethnicities, body shapes and weights, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses.



Eating disorders may carry an increased risk for both suicide and medical complications.

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Genes and environment play important roles in the development of eating disorders.



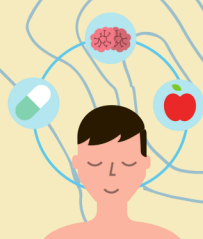
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Genes alone do not predict who will develop eating disorders.



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Full recovery from an eating disorder is possible. Early detection and intervention are important.



Some quick Do's and Don'ts on communication:

- Don't say "you look good!"
- Don't say "I disagree with your weight goals."
- Don't focus on weight and food talk. Do change the subject by asking "if we weren't talking about weight/food, what would we need to be talking about?"
- Don't say "just eat." (Or "just don't eat" depending on your loved ones ED.)
- Do avoid being the food police, but speak to dietician/therapist about your observations.

How can you help?

Practice validation:

Emotion-Focused Family Therapy techniques (EFFT)

- Validate with three comments before moving to solving the problem, and don't forget to "get off your butt" (replace with "because")
 - I can't imagine what you are going through because...
 - That must be so hard, because...
 - That sounds incredibly painful, because...

Re-nourishment of brain and body is number one. Support that priority.

- Ask them to help define your role in their recovery
- Use your influence to simplify and reduce stress in their lives
- Help them systematically face their fears
- Learn all you can about eating disorders



Express your belief in them and their ability to recover

- Love them and be involved in their lives
- Refuse to allow them to push you away
- Engagement is possible but controlling outcomes is not
- Disconnect love from achievements
- Give love, encouragement, kindness, and hope

Encourage Accountability

- Ask them for permission to hold them accountable
- Let them know your expectation for complete honesty
- Assure that someone has the role of holding them accountable, it doesn't have to be you
- When possible, help them receive treatment from a team of specialists



Be an example

- Example is the most powerful intervention in the world
- Take good care of yourself and continue living life
- Take ownership of your own weaknesses and struggles as an example
- Give yourself and your loved one permission to be human and make mistakes

Structure and recovery

- Create opportunities to discuss the eating disorder
- Including other times where the eating disorder will not be discussed
- Provide structure with food as needed depending on the person, and their stage of recovery
- Strive to avoid becoming hostage to the illness or enabling the illness, utilize the care team to help you tell the difference

