

Eating Disorder "Proofing" Your Home

Presented by: **Carly Erickson, MPH**
Family Counselor at CFC

THINGS TO GET RID OF

- Throw away all scales. Don't hide them, throw them away! Hidden scales are very easily found. Dispose of all laxatives, diet pills, diuretics, or other potentially harmful medication.
- Get rid of all "ED clothing"--with consent and collaboration from your loved one
- Throw away all fashion and exercise magazines or catalogs. Looking through these is sure to send shaky self-esteem to the sub-basement.
- Eliminate diet talk and lingo from your conversations. There are no such thing as "good" or "bad" foods. A comment such as "don't worry, it's fat free," can create negative emotions in a recovering person. Don't buy "diet foods."



*There is no sure way to rid your home of anything and everything that may trigger an eating disorder.

However, you can help make your home a safer place. Whether yourself or a family member is recovering from an eating disorder, or you are simply trying to help your household members have healthier body images, here are some suggestions that will make your home a friendlier environment.

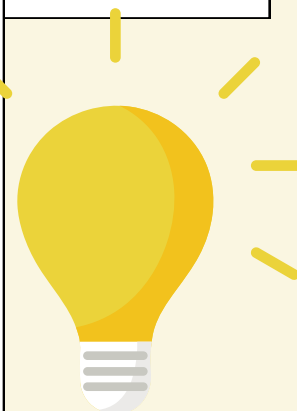
THINGS TO HAVE HANDY

- Have the individual's favorite foods around the house for snacking. It is important to enjoy food and not get too hungry.
- Have magazines that encourage hobbies and interests. Have uplifting, meaningful, positive books, music, and movies available. Be mindful of websites visited.
- Interact in ways that do not center on the eating disorder. Share in games, activities, hobbies.
- Create a welcoming environment that is open to conversation, ask what would be helpful for you to ask or avoid saying. Each individual recognizes things that trigger them the most.



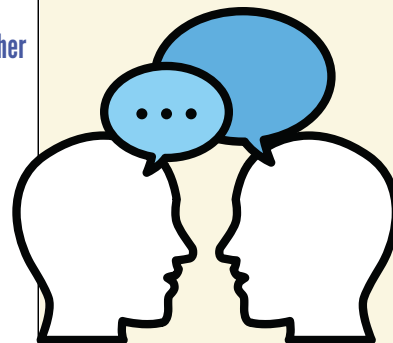
DON'T FORGET TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Make time for things that fill you up (hobbies, friends, recreation) and give you energy to continue to support your loved one.
- It's your loved one's recovery and responsibility. You still can and need to be supportive.
- Develop a support network for yourself; you need to be able to express your feelings and experiences, your fears and frustrations. Find out about support groups in your area or online.
- Take care of yourself and be patient. There is no quick or easy cure of an eating disorder. There is hope. Recovery is attainable.



HOW TO COMMUNICATE

- When inviting those with eating disorders to talk, ask how they are doing or feeling in life and in general, rather than asking about eating disorder behaviors.
- Check in with your loved one on a regular basis (ie: once a week) to inquire about their eating disorder. They decide how often, what and how to share. Let your loved one teach you what they need. Try to accept and be satisfied with what they share.
- Refrain from any comments on a person’s body or appearance. Even compliments may be twisted in the mind and becomes something negative.
- When they ask about their appearance, try to let them talk about how they are feeling; reaffirm your love and acceptance. Gently point out that fishing for a response about their body is the eating disorder talking.
- Be available even when our loved one appears to not want you. Be a good listener. Validate their feelings.



One of the best things you can do, for yourself and your loved one, is develop a healthy body image yourself! Avoid voicing criticisms of your body and others, cultivate gratitude for the things your body can do, rather than its shape or appearance. Take notice of how our society intentionally triggers body shame and dissatisfaction in advertising and media. Don’t buy products that use these tactics. This is hard work, that your loved one is also doing, and it is worth the journey.

Resources for Further Learning:

Morethanabody.org is the home of the non-profit Beauty Redefined and More Than a Body. They have resources on body image and how to cultivate body image resilience targeted at girls and women of all ages.



F.E.A.S.T.—Families Empowered And Supporting Treatment for Eating Disorders, is an international non-profit for parents and caregivers of those affected by eating disorders. Check them out at feast-ed.org