

How to Help a Friend with Eating and Body Image Issues

If you are reading this handout, chances are you are concerned about the eating habits, weight, or body image of someone you care about. This can be a very difficult and scary time for you. You are doing a great thing by looking for more information! These tips may not tell you everything you need to know about what to do in your specific situation, but it is a start.



LEARN as much as you can about eating disorders. Read books, articles, and brochures (get started with the resources on the next page).

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE between facts and myths about weight, nutrition, and exercise. Knowing the facts will help you reason with your friend about any inaccurate ideas that may be fueling their disordered eating patterns.

BE HONEST. Talk openly and honestly about your concerns with the person who is struggling with eating or body image problems. Avoiding it or ignoring it won't help! Be caring, but be firm. Caring about your friend does not mean being manipulated by them. Your friend must be responsible for their actions and the consequences of those actions. Avoid making rules, promises, or expectations that you cannot or will not uphold. For example, "I promise not to tell anyone" or "If you do this again, I'll never talk to you."

COMPLIMENT your friend's wonderful personality, successes, or accomplishments. Remind your friend that "true beauty" is not skin deep.

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL in regard to sensible eating, exercise, and self-acceptance.

TELL SOMEONE. It may seem difficult to know when, if at all, to tell someone else about your concerns. Addressing body image or eating problems in their beginning stages offers your friend the best chance for working through these issues and becoming healthy again. Don't wait until the situation is so severe that your friend's life is in danger. Your friend needs a great deal of support and understanding.

Please reach out to the University Nurse in Health Services with your concerns (email healthservices@northpark.edu).

Remember that you cannot force someone to seek help, change their habits or adjust their attitudes. You can make important progress in honestly sharing your concerns, providing support and knowing where to go for more information! People struggling with anorexia, bulimia or binge eating disorder do need professional help. There is help available and there is hope.

Resources

www.NationalEatingDisorders.org

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) supports individuals and families affected by eating disorders, and serves as a catalyst for prevention, cures and access to quality care.

National Eating Disorders Association Helpline: 1-800-931-2237

This helpline offers support Monday–Thursday from 8 am–8pm CST, and Friday from 8 am–4 pm CST. You can expect to receive support, information, referrals, and guidance about treatment options for either you or your loved one. You can also contact this helpline through its online chat function, available on its website. Additionally, there is an option to send a text message if you are in crisis by **texting NEDA to 741741**; a trained volunteer from the Crisis Text Line will get in touch with you.

www.eatingdisorderhope.com

Eating Disorder Hope’s mission is to offer hope, information, and resources to individual eating disorder sufferers, their family members, and treatment providers. Find specific information about college students with eating disorders at <https://www.eatingdisorderhope.com/information/anorexia/college-life-how-to-handle-anorexia-nervosa>

www.anad.org

The National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders includes information about eating disorders, how to seek treatment, and support groups for people suffering from eating disorders and their families.

www.Bulimia.com

A resource dedicated to providing information to men and women suffering from bulimia nervosa and co-occurring eating disorders, mental health, or substance use disorders.

www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org

Following the 12-step approach used by Alcoholics Anonymous, Eating Disorders Anonymous can help people struggling with eating disorders. The website lists Overeaters Anonymous meetings nationwide.