

## WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF AN EATING DISORDER?

- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories, dieting, and/or body image.
- Development of abnormal, secretive, extreme, or ritualized food or eating habits.
- Withdrawal from usual friends and activities.
- Evidence of binge eating, such as the disappearance of a large amount of food.
- Evidence of purging behaviors, including frequent trips to the bathroom after meals, self-induced vomiting, periods of fasting, or laxative, diet pill, or diuretic abuse.
- Compulsive or excessive exercising.
- Discoloration or staining of the teeth.
- Feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, or irritability.

While the signs listed may indicate an eating disorder, they are not all-inclusive. If you are concerned about someone, but they are not demonstrating these warning signs, speak with them or seek professional guidance.

## RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE.

## HELP IS AVAILABLE.

For information, resources, and to get involved, visit:  
[www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)

### CONTACT HELPLINE

Call or chat for resources and treatment options.

 **800-931-2237**

 **[nationaleatingdisorders.org/helplinechat](http://nationaleatingdisorders.org/helplinechat)**

 **[info@nationaleatingdisorders.org](mailto:info@nationaleatingdisorders.org)**

 text 'NEDA' to **741-741** for 24/7 crisis support

# EATING DISORDERS: HOW TO HELP

It can be overwhelming to see a loved one struggle with an eating disorder or disordered eating. You can help your loved one on the path to recovery by learning about eating disorders, starting a conversation, and sharing supportive resources and treatment options.

### NATIONAL EATING DISORDERS ASSOCIATION

1500 Broadway, Suite 1101  
New York, NY 10036  
212-575-6200



## LEARN ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

If your loved one is struggling with food and/or body image issues, they may have some of these characteristics. The term “eating disorder” typically refers to one (or more) of the following:

- **Anorexia Nervosa (AN)** is characterized primarily by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.
- **Bulimia Nervosa (BN)** is characterized primarily by a cycle of binge eating followed by compensatory behaviors, such as self-induced vomiting, in an attempt to counteract the effects of binge eating.
- **Binge Eating Disorder (BED)** is characterized primarily by recurrent binge eating without the regular use of compensatory measures.
- **Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder (OSFED)** is a feeding or eating disorder that causes significant distress or impairment but does not meet the criteria for another feeding or eating disorder.

# START A CONVERSATION

## WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

If you are worried about someone’s eating behaviors or attitudes, then it is appropriate for you to express your concerns in a loving, supportive way.

It is important to handle these issues with honesty and respect. It is also important to discuss your worries early on, rather than waiting until they have endured any of the damaging physical and emotional effects of eating disorders.

Because your loved one’s health, or even their life, may be in danger, it is important not to keep your concerns a secret for fear of making them angry or getting them in trouble.

Other people in their life need to know so they can encourage them to acknowledge their problem and get help. If your friend is under 18, a trusted adult needs to know immediately.

In a calm and caring way, talk to your loved one about specific things you see or feel. Share your memories of two or three times when you felt concerned, afraid, or uneasy because of their eating or exercise rituals. Talk about the feelings you experienced as a result of these events.

It is best to focus on the specific signs and symptoms that have caused you to feel concerned, not the person’s weight or appearance. Try to do this in a very supportive, non-confrontational way.

### Three suggestions to try:

- 1 **Use “I” statements.** “I’m concerned about you because you refuse to eat breakfast or lunch. I feel afraid when I hear you vomiting.”
- 2 **Avoid accusatory “You” statements.** “You have to eat something! You’re out of control!”
- 3 **Avoid giving simple solutions.** “If you’d just stop then everything would be fine.”

## FIND HELP

### Contact the Helpline to ask about these resources:

- How to Talk to a Loved One About Eating Concerns
- How to Help a Friend with Eating and Body Image Issues
- Parent Toolkit (includes information for all loved ones)
- Treatment Options: [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/find-treatment](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/find-treatment)

☎ 800-931-2237

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