

Guidelines for Families and Friends

- 1.** Learn as much as you can about nutrition and the treatment and medical consequences of eating disorders. Offer educational materials to your loved one.
- 2.** Remember your loved one is not the eating disorder. The eating disorder is an illness that is affecting your loved one. The eating disorder is no one's fault.
- 3.** Try to connect with your loved one; discuss any non-eating disorder related topic and spend time together doing things unrelated to food, clothes and exercise.
- 4.** Encourage your loved one to talk to you about her or his thoughts, positive and negative about the eating disorder and recovery.
- 5.** Help your loved one create a list of pros and cons to recovery; allow your loved one to think on her/his own.
- 6.** Listen compassionately and share connections you observe between the eating disorder and consequences.
- 7.** Avoid a logical argument about the eating disorder – it will not work. The eating disorder is an emotional system. Use indirect references or inquiries such as “have you noticed that...”, “someone mentioned to me that...”; avoid tones that can create a battle of wills or expertise.
- 8.** Protect your family life from being overtaken by the eating disorder. Try to go on with your life as normally as possible.
- 9.** Look after yourself. Maintain your own interests and activities. Encourage all family members to do the same.
- 10.** Provide feedback and observations about your loved one's health---draw connections between the eating disorder and its consequences (fatigue, weakness, poor concentration, personality changes, social isolation, moodiness etc).

