



## 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).

