



NEDA's Parent, Family & Friends Network offers a new national outreach: The NEDA Navigators

Picture this:

A parent is frantic. Their child, away at college, is struggling with issues related to their eating disorder. They connect to another parent who listens calmly and offers suggestions for where to turn, what questions to ask and what to do. A sense of relief washes over that worried parent when practical assistance is offered from a caring person, someone who "gets it", at a critical time.

NAVIGATORS

This true story is one of many from a growing group of compassionate individuals who will be forming the new outreach of the Parent, Family & Friends Network (PFN). This group is called the NEDA Navigators (NN). To be a NN you must have had first hand experience supporting a loved one with an eating disorder. You must be well into your own or a loved one's recovery and volunteer to be trained in how to personally connect with others to offer encouragement and informal support. NN's are "educated" friends, not therapists.

A problem that has long existed for families and individuals affected by eating disorders is the difficulty of finding and making personal, non-professional connections with others for informal support and resources, especially at the onset of the disorder. Navigators will be trained to: (a) respond to families' and individual's initial questions and fears at a time when everything may be confusing for them (b) share their own story responsibly, (c) help people connect to available resources, information and options d) help people learn what questions to ask as they seek help, and (e) build a healthy relationship of support. Training sessions to be a NEDA Navigator will be offered via teleconference and webinar every other month. Doug Bunnell, PhD, former NEDA President and Board member, VP and Director of Outpatient Clinical Services of Renfrew Center is leading the trainings.

It is important to know that our PFN continues to connect families to families, at various stages of a loved ones illness, and sadly, connects parents who have lost a child to an eating disorder with parents who have already experienced such a tragedy. Please know that these connections are important, no one should be alone, and we can all learn from one another.

The PFN program brings people together. In a world where eating disorders can be overwhelming and frightening at best, it's good to know.

Upcoming training to become a NEDA Navigator will be announced via a special email from NEDA headquarters. Sign up to receive NEDA E-alerts [here](#)

If you'd like more information about how to join PFN or NEDA Navigators specifically, contact:

**Susan Maccia, PFN Chair slmaccia@gmail.com or
Laurie Vanderboom, NEDA Director of Programs pffnetwork@myneda.org**