



How to take care of yourself while caring for a loved one with an eating disorder



- Take time for yourself. Keep in mind that what you do is a much more powerful message than what you say. Being a good role model for your child or family member during the healing process means taking care of your own physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.
- If you are married or in a significant relationship, spend time on that relationship. Talk daily to your partner about your feelings and frustrations. Take time for a hug. If time allows, make a date for something you both enjoy to have fun.
- Seek support from family, friends, and/or professionals whom you find to be helpful. Allow yourself to be cared for.
- Ask for help with the mundane. It makes your friends feel useful and keeps you from becoming isolated. Make a list of things you can use help with: laundry, errands, lawn care, housecleaning, meals for the rest of the family. If someone says, “Let me know if there is anything I can help with,” show them your list of unassigned tasks. Ask what they can do.
- Remind yourself daily that you are doing the best for your child or family member. Keeping a journal can help—making a self-commitment to jot down one positive thought each day can help.
- Find support in what others are saying – join a local or online support group.
- Say “No” when you can. Give yourself a break. Don’t take on any added responsibilities at this time.
- Explore your options if you think you may need to leave work temporarily to provide full-time care. Learn about the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). FMLA provides job protection for employees who must leave their job for family medical concerns.

KEY SOURCES:

National Eating Disorders Association

Canadian National Eating Disorder Information Centre www.nedic.ca/giveandgethelp/helpforfriendsfamily.shtml

University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY872>

Anorexia nervosa and related eating disorders, Inc. www.anred.com/prev.html