

What Can You Do to Help Prevent Eating Disorders?

We can all be advocates for eating disorders prevention: taking steps to educate ourselves and others, challenging the notion that there's a 'right' way to look and spreading the word about eating disorders can be powerful actions with far-reaching effects.

Educate Yourself

- Learn all you can about anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder and OSFED. Genuine awareness will help you avoid judgmental or mistaken attitudes about food, weight, body shape and eating disorders.
- Avoid categorizing foods as “good/safe” vs. “bad/dangerous.” Remember, we all need to eat a balanced variety of foods.

Challenge the Thin Ideal

- Choose to challenge the false belief that thinness, weight loss and/or muscularity are desirable, while body fat and weight gain are shameful or indicate laziness, worthlessness or immorality.
- Avoid attitudes or actions that communicate, “I will like you better if you lose weight, don't eat so much or change your body shape.”
- Discourage the idea that a particular diet, weight or body size will automatically lead to happiness and fulfillment.
- Decide to avoid judging others and yourself on the basis of body weight or shape. Turn off the voices in your head that tell you that a person's body weight or muscularity says anything about their character, personality or value as a person.

Talk About It

- Be a model of healthy self-esteem and body image. Recognize that others pay attention and learn from the way you talk about yourself and your body. Choose to talk about yourself with respect and appreciation. Choose to value yourself based on your goals, accomplishments, talents and character. Refrain from letting the way you feel about your body weight and shape determine the course of your day. Embrace the natural diversity of human bodies and celebrate your body's unique shape and size.
- If you think someone has an eating disorder, express your concerns in a forthright, caring manner. Gently but firmly encourage the person to seek trained professional help.



Take Action!

- Become a critical viewer of the media and its messages about self-esteem and body image. Talk back to the television when you hear a comment or see an image that promotes a certain body ideal at all costs. Rip out (or better yet, write to the editor about) advertisements or articles in magazines that make you feel bad about your body shape or size. To learn more, please visit [Tips for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media](#).
- Support local and national nonprofit eating disorders organizations — like the National Eating Disorders Association — by [volunteering your time](#) or giving a [tax-deductible donation](#).