

# How To Help a Loved One

## TIPS ON HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS

Family and friends can play an important role in identifying symptoms to the person struggling and encouraging them to seek help. It can be difficult to express your concerns and see your loved one struggle.



NationalEatingDisorders.org

Here are tips on how to open up about your concerns:

- **Learn about eating disorders.**
  - Educate yourself about the myths and stereotypes. Knowing about the facts can help you reason with your loved one.
- **Rehearse what you want to say.**
  - Write out your thoughts or role-play with a trusted person.
- **Establish a safe space.**
  - Make sure you set time to discuss your concerns in a private place.
- **Use “I” Statements - Stick to the Facts.**
  - Share behaviors you’ve observed personally. Sounding accusatory can cause someone to feel defensive.
- **Be caring but firm.**
  - Avoid making promises such as you won’t tell anyone. You may need to speak with others to help ensure that your loved one is getting the help and support they need.
- **Avoid overly simplistic solutions.**
  - These can reinforce myths about eating disorders. It isn’t helpful to say “just stop” or “just start eating more” – eating disorders are complex issues.
- **Be prepared for negative reactions.**
  - Individuals may react differently such as being relieved, defensive, angry, or brush off your concerns. These responses are normal. Reiterate your concerns, let them know you care, and leave the conversation open.
- **Remove potential stigma around asking for help.**
  - Let your loved one know it’s okay to admit to struggling with an eating disorder. It’s not a choice – many people will be diagnosed and can recover.
- **Encourage them to seek professional help.**
  - Getting timely, effective treatment increases a person’s chances for recovery.

NEDA has resources for individuals and families looking to learn more about eating disorders and where to find treatment.

**Scan QR Code for our  
Resource Center:**

