THE Emily PROGRAM

SIBLING'S GUIDE

to

FAMILY-BASED TREATMENT

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WHAT ARE EATING DISORDERS?

Why is my sibling acting different?

Eating disorders are a mental health disorder that impact the brain and body. They are very serious and can impact your sibling biologically, psychologically, and socially. Eating disorders are not something that can be fixed quickly and may require intensive treatment, but with the right treatment, a large percentage of people make a full recovery. Individuals with an eating disorder can see themselves differently than they really are (we call these distortions), and your sibling will learn how to challenge these thoughts during their treatment.

Common words you might hear from your families or in sessions:

- **Behaviors** - Actions that your sibling takes that are not typical and are often harmful.
- **Skills** - Tools that your sibling is taught to help them cope with the negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to their eating disorder.
- **Treatment Team** - A group of people working together to help your sibling get better. The treatment team may include doctors, dietitians, therapists, and psychiatrists.
- **Family-Based Treatment (FBT), or "The Maudsley Method"** - The leading evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents with eating disorders. In FBT, families play a major role in the recovery process and help the child or adolescent with an eating disorder return to normalized eating patterns.
- **Level of Care -** This is how often and how long someone needs to be in treatment. It is different for everyone. Your sibling will be in one of these care levels:

Residential	Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP) / Intensive Day Program (IDP)	Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)	Outpatient
24-hour care, 7 days per week.	A minimum of 30 hours a week. Typically 6 hours a day, 5 days a week.	Up to 12 hours per week. Typically 3 hours a day, 4 days a week.	Periodic appointments, typically once per week for an hour.

Eating disorders aren't a choice, a behavior problem, or a lack of willpower. An eating disorder is an illness with biological and genetic roots that are influenced by culture.

It is important to see your sibling as separate from their eating disorder. You can think of their eating disorder as a small alien living in their brain making them experience thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are not typical for them. Thinking this way can help assure you are never blaming your sibling for things the eating disorder is making them do.

Please Remember

Families do not cause eating disorders. Families are often an important part of the recovery process.

HELPFUL ACTIVITY

Externalize the Eating Disorder

Help your sibling name their eating disorder and ask them to draw a picture of it for you. When the eating disorder is causing them to have behaviors or feel down, you can remind them that the eating disorder is to blame.

Examples:

- My sister named her eating disorder Ed, so now when she is having a hard time at the dinner table I can say, "I really don't like when Ed is with us at the dinner table. Is there anything I can do to help?"
- We named my sibling's eating disorder after our least favorite movie villain "Thanos," so whenever the eating disorder is being loud we can yell back at Thanos instead of at my sibling.

In our family we call my brother's eating disorder "**The Monster**" and when he is having a really hard time eating, we draw pictures of "**The Monster**" and rip them up!

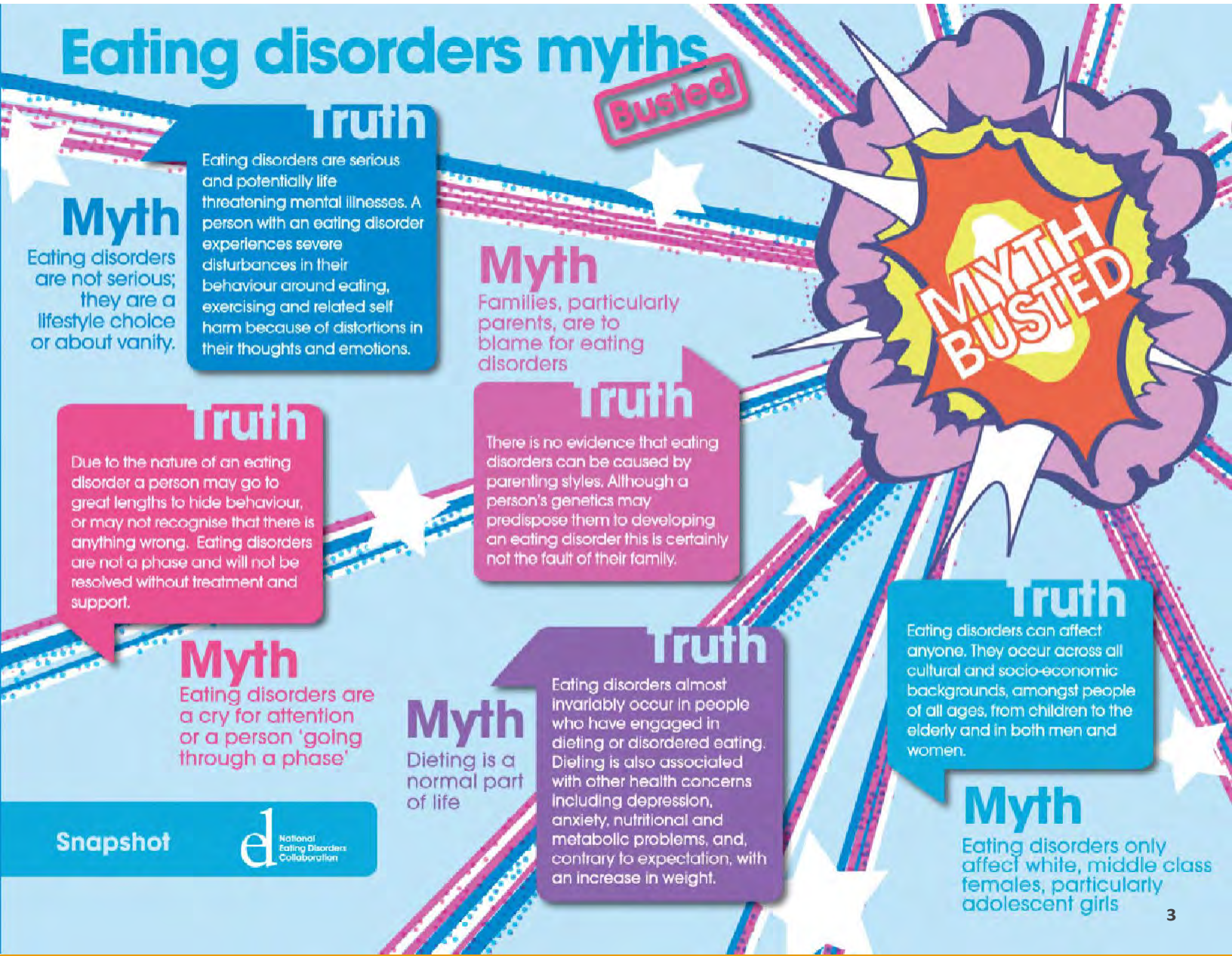
TRUTHS VS. MYTHS

Research indicates that there are generally low levels of mental health literacy in the communities; however, general beliefs and misunderstandings about mental health affect community responses to eating disorders.

It is important that everyone understands the facts about mental health and eating disorders. This leads not only to a more aware and accepting community, but also improves prevention, early identification and help-seeking.

For more information visit:

nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/eating-disorders-explained/myth



DO'S AND DON'TS

Siblings have a very important and specific role in Family-Based Treatment. You can support your sibling without being an extra parent!

Treatment is challenging and your sibling will need someone who understands your family just like they do. Lend an ear when they need to vent about challenges and be available to help distract them when they need to get their mind off of it. Below are some tips to help support them.

DON'T	DO
Talk about diets/weight/exercise.	Talk about fun and neutral topics (movies, pets etc.)
Comment on your sibling's food and appearance.	Ask what would be helpful to talk about to distract.
Say "good job" when they finish eating.	Offer affirmations (e.g. "I like spending time with you"; "I know you worked really hard to finish that")
Be the "food police." (e.g. "eat your snack right now")	Remind yourself that it is your parents' job, offer to do something fun with your sibling after they eat
Feel like you must coach your sibling to finish.	Talk about what you can do together after they finish.
Blame your sibling for arguing at the table.	Externalize the eating disorder.
Stare at your sibling while they are eating.	Offer to eat the same thing as them.
Focus all your time and energy on them.	Find time to do things you like (i.e., self-care).

MEALTIME DISTRACTIONS & WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

MATCH BITES
Offer to eat the same food as them and match bites.

WATCH TV
Enjoy a movie while you eat.

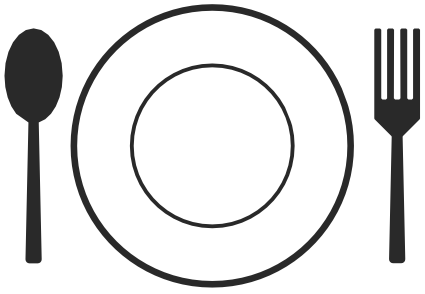
GET CREATIVE
Plan a fun craft, activity, or self-care activity you can do together during or after the meal.

ASK QUESTIONS
Ask your sibling their favorite game or distraction they have learned in treatment.

LISTEN TO MUSIC
Make a playlist and listen to music together.

CHAT
Talk about uplifting things, for example: places you can travel to in the future, your favorite seasonal activity, funny TikToks you saw today.

PLAY A GAME
Play a game that does not take up too much table space, for example: 20 Questions, Would You Rather, I Spy, Heads-up or Go Fish.



MEAL TIME DISTRACTIONS

COMMUNICATION

Treatment can be a very stressful time for everyone involved, which means communicating respectfully and effectively is a must! "Interpersonal effectiveness" is a how we communicate effectively to make and maintain healthy relationships. Your sibling is likely learning how to use interpersonal effectiveness in treatment, and you can too!

Interpersonal effectiveness can help:

- Attend to relationships
- Balance priorities versus demands
- Balance the 'wants' and 'shoulds'
- Build a sense of mastery and self-respect

If you need to ask for something and the **RELATIONSHIP** is important, use **GIVE**:

- **G**entle: Use a gentle manner even if you are angry. Strive to treat people with a degree of respect that reflects kindness.
- **I**nterest: Show interest in others points. Pay attention to other ideas and show you are listening by nodding, eye contact, etc.
- **V**alidate: Validate other experiences, thoughts, feelings, and statements. Reflect back on what others' say without parroting or checking the facts (challenging them).
- **E**asy: Use an easy manner in communicating. Maintain an awareness to body language including posture, tone, volume, speed of voice, and smiles.

If you need to ask for something and your **SELF-RESPECT** is important, use **FAST**:

- **F**air: Be fair in your interpretations/negotiations. Strive to come to solutions that are mutually beneficial and ethical.
- **A**pologies: DO NOT apologize for disagreeing if doing so contradicts your values.
- **S**tick: Stick to values by figuring out what your personal values are and not giving them up to appease others.
- **T**ruthful: Strive for honesty and authenticity in what and how you communicate with others.

You can also work on setting boundaries with your family members. Here are some examples:

- Your sibling asks repeatedly if they have gained weight:
  - » You can communicate that you are not comfortable answering that question and that you can help them to use a skill.
- Your parent asks you to make sure your sibling eats after school:
  - » You can let them know you will communicate whether your sibling completes the meal, but you do not feel comfortable coaching them to complete a meal without a parent present.
- Your sibling and parents are arguing at the dinner table each night and you feel upset:
  - » You can communicate how you feel and ask if you are able to leave the table or listen to music to help relax while they finish their discussion.

SELF-CARE

What is self-care?

- Any activity that you do voluntarily which helps you maintain your physical, mental, or emotional health.
- It can help you feel healthy, relaxed and ready to take on your life and responsibilities.

Why do we need self-care?

- When we are stressed or busy, we don't always realize that we're not taking good care of our emotional, mental, or physical health.
  - This leads to burn out or feeling like we're out of gas and unable to keep moving forward.
  - You might become grumpy, angry, tired, or easy to annoy.
- Eating disorders stress the whole family, including you as a sibling.
  - It's important to take care of yourself, so that you can be the best version of you.

Examples of self-care:

- Self-care doesn't have to be hard or expensive!
- It should feel natural and easy.
  - It should feel good – relaxing, funny, soothing.
- Check in with yourself.
  - Are you thirsty?
  - Are you hungry?
  - Do you need a shower?
  - Have you been outside lately?
- Treat yourself!
  - What would feel really good right now?
    - Going for a walk
    - Calling a friend or family member
    - Watching funny videos, a movie, or a show
    - Taking a bath/shower
    - Lighting a candle
    - Going shopping for something
    - Trying something new
    - Writing in a journal

TYPES OF SELF-CARE

Types of Self-Care

Physical

Sleep
Stretching
Walking
Exercise
Nutrition
Yoga

Emotional

Stress Management
Coping Skills
Compassion
Therapy
Journaling

Social

Boundaries
Support System
Positive
Social Media
Communication
Friends

Spiritual

Time Alone
Meditation
Prayer
Nature
Sacred Space

Personal

Hobbies
Creativity
Goals
Identity
Authenticity

Space

Safety
Healthy
Environment
Stability
Clean Space

Financial

Saving
Budgeting
Money
Management
Paying Bills
Boundaries

Work

Time Management
Work Boundaries
Breaks

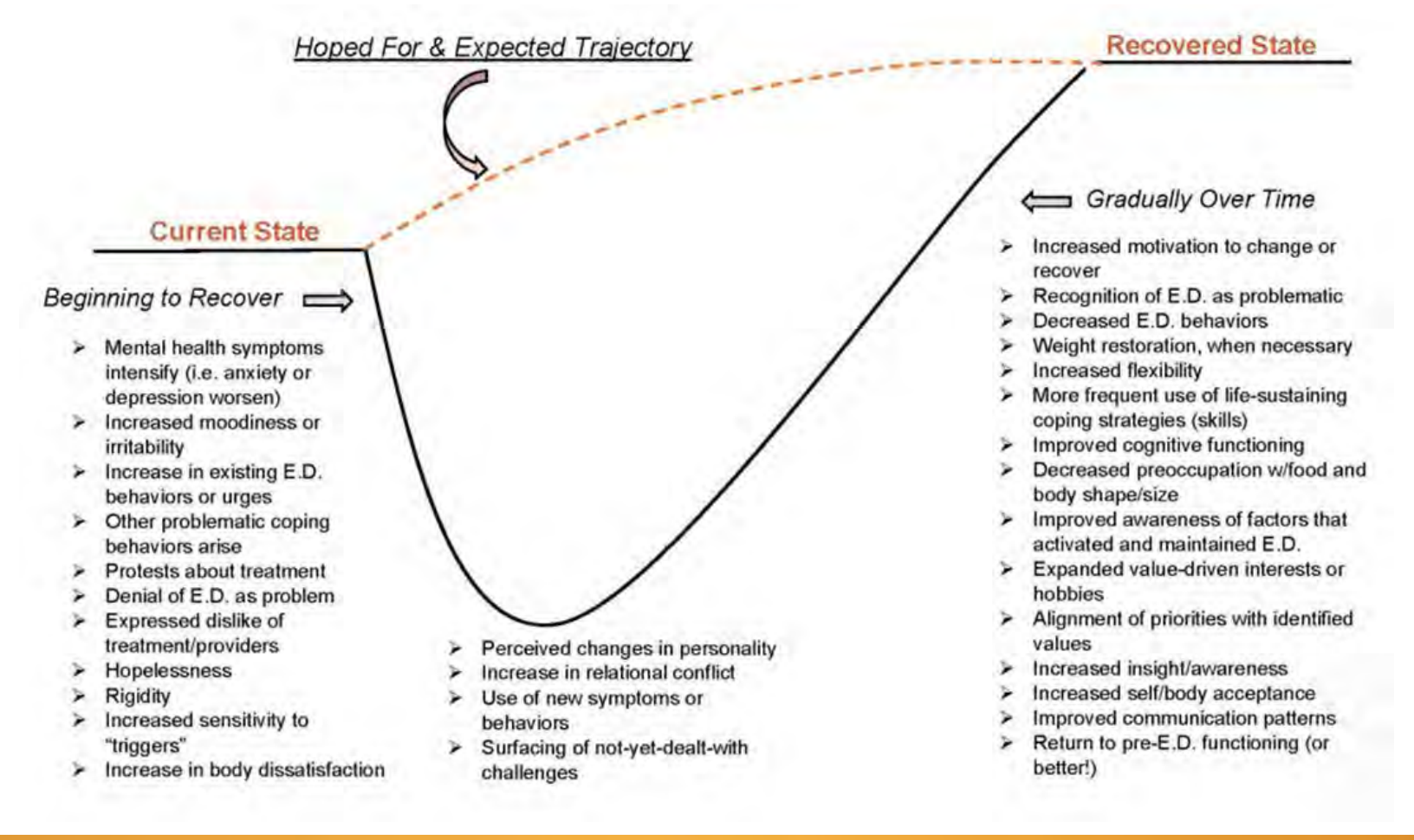
BlessingManifesting

WHAT RECOVERY LOOKS LIKE

J Curve Recovery Process

Recovery from an eating disorder is a long process that will likely include many ups and downs. Often a person will feel worse before they feel better, since challenging their eating disorder and changing their behavior is very difficult. This is often referred to as the "***J Curve Recovery Process***" which is demonstrated below.

It can help to look back at this when you notice your sibling struggling to remind yourself that treatment can be difficult, but it means that they are doing what is necessary for recovery!



STAGES OF RECOVERY

There are five stages of change that occur in the recovery process:

1. Precontemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance

Your sibling may go through this cycle more than one time or may need to revisit a particular stage before moving on to the next. They may also go through the stages for each individual eating disorder symptom. Recovery from an eating disorder is unique for every person and it can feel like a roller coaster when they move between the stages. Looking back on the stages of change can help you understand what's going on with your sibling and what your role should be.

STAGES OF RECOVERY

Precontemplation

The Precontemplation stage is evident when a person does not believe they have a problem. You and your family may have picked up on the eating disorder behaviors but your sibling may not recognize them as an issue.

- "This is what my friends do, so this is what I do. I'll be fine."
- "My doctor says I'm not healthy, but I like what I'm doing."

Contemplation

The Contemplation stage occurs when an individual is willing to admit that they have a problem and are now open to receiving help. The fear of change may be very strong, and this is when working with family and the treatment team is extremely important.

- "I know I need to change, but I just don't feel comfortable doing it."
- "I started to read *Life Without Ed*, but I don't know how this applies to my life."

Preparation

The person transitions into the Preparation stage when they are ready to change but are uncertain about how to do it. This is when family and the treatment team help develop a plan of action to work toward recovery. As a sibling, this is when you can learn how to best support them through their journey.

- "I know I need help, so I've accepted that I'm going to be in treatment for the time being."
- "I've talked with my parents about how they can help support me and we have a plan for family dinners."

Action

The Action stage begins when the person is ready to implement their strategy and confront the eating disorder behavior head-on. At this point, they are open to trying new ideas and behaviors, and are willing to face fears so the change can occur. Trusting the treatment team and their support network is essential to making the Action Stage successful.

- "I understand my meal plan and I've been following it the best I can."
- "I've been trying to use coping skills when I'm feeling anxious, and they have been helping a little bit."

Maintenance

The Maintenance stage is when the person with the eating disorder has been in their recovery for six months or more and is using the skills they have learned to form healthy habits.

- "I went to a friend's birthday party and ate birthday cake. It was really hard and I made it through."
- "I have learned that I don't need my eating disorder to live my life."

RESOURCES FOR SIBLINGS

The Emily Program Website

The Emily Program website has great articles, podcasts, and resources for how siblings are such an important part of the recovery process.

www.emilyprogram.com/tag/family

Kym Advocates

Kym Advocates is a website run by a sibling of someone with an eating disorder who showcases other siblings who have experienced the treatment process.

kymadvocates.com

The National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA)

The National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA) has a lot of great information about eating disorders in general if you would like to learn more.

www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

FEAST

FEAST is a website made for families supporting a loved one through Family-Based Treatment. The article link below talks all about the importance of siblings.

www.feast-ed.org/a-seat-at-the-table-supporting-siblings-of-eating-disorder-patients