What to Do When You Think Someone May Have an Eating Disorder

SPEAK UP

Eating disorders often thrive in secret, so the most important thing you can do is talk to the person about what you're noticing. We suggest using "I" statements during this conversation, such as "I'm concerned because I haven't seen you have lunch like you usually do." It is common for individuals having problems with food or body image to minimize concerns that others bring to them, so be prepared to continue having the conversation. (See the back for a quiz that you can use to guide the discussion.)

THANK THEM FOR CONFIDING IN YOU AND OFFER SUPPORT

It's incredibly brave to take that first step and tell someone that you're struggling with disordered eating. Thank them for confiding in you and offer compassionate, non-judgmental support. Let them know you care about them, and you'll be available as someone to talk to or a shoulder to cry on. Ask what kind of support they need from you so they can get healthy.

ASK THEM TO GET TREATMENT

Eating disorders are real, complex illnesses that can cause serious harm. It is critical that you urge anyone who is struggling to reach out for treatment. Ask them to contact an eating disorder specialist and schedule an assessment.

For Questions: Ask Emily!

888.364.5977
emilyprogram.com

©2024 ACCANTO HEALTH

THE Emily PROGRAM

Common Signs of Eating Disorders

WATCH FOR THESE WARNING SIGNS

- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Frequently talking about food, weight, or shape
- Rapid or persistent decline or increase in food intake
- Eating in secret, hiding food, or disrupting family meals
- Minimizing food and eating problems, despite concerns of others
- Purging; restricting; binge eating; compulsive eating; compulsive exercising; abuse of diet pills, laxatives, diuretics, or emetics

EATING DISORDER ASSESSMENT TOOL

If you believe someone is struggling with eating disorder behaviors, ask if it's okay to discuss their eating habits. For example, "I'm concerned about your eating. Could we discuss how you typically eat and your relationship with food?"

This tool can help assess the situation.

- Do you worry about your weight and body shape more than other people?
- Do you avoid certain foods for reasons other than allergies or religion?
- Are you often on a diet?
- Do you feel your weight is an important aspect of your identity?
- Are you fearful of gaining weight?
- Do you often feel out of control when you eat?
- Do you regularly eat what others may consider to be a large quantity of food at one time?
- Do you regularly eat until feeling uncomfortably full?
- Do you hide what you eat from others, or eat in secret?
- Do you often feel fat?
- Do you feel guilty or depressed after eating?
- Do you ever make yourself vomit (throw up) after eating?
- Do you use your insulin in ways not prescribed to manage your weight?
- Do you take any medication or supplement to compensate for eating or to give yourself permission to eat?
- Do you exercise for the sole purpose of weight control?
- Have people expressed concern about your relationship with food or your body?

Two or more "yes" answers indicate the presence of disordered eating. Contact The Emily Program at 1-888-364-5977 or emilyprogram.com to schedule an assessment.

Take the First Step:
Our experts are here to guide you toward a healthier, more fulfilling relationship with food.