



Do's & Don'ts for Confronting Individuals with Eating Disorders

DO

- ◆ Talk to the person about it.
- ◆ Express your caring and concerns.
- ◆ Listen.
- ◆ Ask questions.
- ◆ Let him / her know specific things you appreciate about him / her (besides appearance).
- ◆ Try to do social activities that do not involve food.
- ◆ Read and / or attend a support group to gain a better understanding.
- ◆ Recommend a consultation with a physician and / or counselor.
- ◆ Hold him / her accountable for his / her behavior (i.e. eating or not eating meals, getting counseling or going to support groups.)
- ◆ Be willing to talk about your feelings and concerns.
- ◆ Express your willingness to help in some appropriate way, such as finding meetings or offering to be with him / her when talking with parents.
- ◆ Talk about behaviors you have noticed.

DON'T

- ◆ Don't minimize the problem.
- ◆ Ignore the problem or hope that he / she is 'going through a phase'.
- ◆ Just tell him / her to eat.
- ◆ Avoid talking about the issue.
- ◆ Tell him / her they look better after gaining or losing weight.
- ◆ Let the individual control you. (Remember that eating disorder issues often center around control.)
- ◆ Assume that he / she is 'cured' when he / she gains weight, leaves the hospital or finishes treatment.
- ◆ Force treatment, unless there is clear medical danger.
- ◆ Try to stop him / her during a binge unless he / she previously indicated that you can intervene.
- ◆ Feel guilty or blame yourself.
- ◆ "Walk on eggshells"
- ◆ Be offended when faced with hostility.

Adapted from: Do's & Don'ts for Family Members and Friends of Individuals with Eating Disorders by Tricia Zigrang, Ph.D.