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.