

HELPING A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE

Confronting

When confronting a person with an eating disorder, it's important to have a plan. A confrontation can be difficult because those suffering from eating disorders are often in denial and the topic is very sensitive. Even if a person does deny the problem, the initial seed has been planted. Hopefully at some point in the future, the problem will be recognized and admitted. Your assistance in confronting a person with an eating disorder may make a big difference in helping them make the decision to seek help and begin the process to recovery:

The Plan: "CONFRONT"

C- Concern. The reason you are doing the confronting is because you care about the mental, physical, and nutritional needs of the person.

O- Organize. Decide in advance **who** will be involved, **where** to confront the person, **why** the concern, **how** to talk him/her, and **when** is a convenient time.

N- Needs. What will be needed after the confrontation? Professional help and/or support groups are options to consider.

F- Face the actual confrontation. Be empathetic but direct. Do not back down if the problem is initially denied.

R- Respond by listening carefully.

O- Offer help and suggestions. You may want to encourage the person to contact you when there is the need to talk to someone.

N- Negotiate another time to talk and a time frame in which to seek professional help.

T- Time. Remember to stress that recovery takes time and patience. However, there is a lot to gain by the process and a lot to lose if the choice is made to continue existing habits.

Some things to do:

- Talk to the person when you are calm, not frustrated or emotional. Be kind. The person is probably ashamed and fears criticism and rejection.
- Mention evidence you have heard or seen that suggests disordered eating. Don't dwell on appearance or weight. Instead talk about health, relationships (withdrawal?), and mood.
- Realize that the person will not change until s/he wants to.
- Provide information.
- Be supportive and caring. Be a good listener and don't give advice unless you are asked to do so. Even then, be prepared to have it ignored.
- Continue to suggest professional help. Don't pester. Don't give up either.
- Ask: "Is doing what you are doing really working to get you what you want?"
- Talk about the advantages of recovery and a normal life.
- Agree that recovery is hard, but emphasize that many people have done it.
- If s/he is frightened to see a counselor, offer to go with her the first time.
- Realize that recovery is the person's responsibility, not yours.
- Resist guilt. Do the best you can and then be gentle with yourself.

Some things not to do:

- Never nag, plead, beg, bribe, threaten, or manipulate. These things don't work.
- Avoid power struggles. You will lose.
- Never criticize or shame. These tactics are cruel, and the person will withdraw.
- Don't pry. Respect privacy.
- Don't be a food monitor. You will create resentment and distance in the relationship.
- Don't try to control. The person will withdraw and ultimately outwit you.
- Don't waste time trying to reassure your friend that s/he is not fat. S/he will not be convinced.
- Don't get involved in endless conversations about weight, food, and calories. They make matters worse.
- Don't give advice unless asked.
- Don't expect the person to follow your advice even if s/he asked for it.
- Don't say, "You are too thin." S/he will secretly celebrate.
- Don't say, "It's good you have gained weight." S/he will lose it.
- Don't let the person always decide when, what and where you will eat. She should not control everything, every time.
- Don't ignore stolen food and evidence of purging. Insist on responsibility.
- Don't overestimate what you can accomplish.

Source: Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders
www.anad.org