



# HOW TO SUPPORT A FRIEND: EATING DISORDERS

## WHAT IS AN EATING DISORDER?

An eating disorder can be characterized by extreme thoughts, emotions or attitudes about food, body size and/or shape. Often, it is a dangerous response to psychological and/or emotional stress in a person's life or past experiences. The three most common types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder. It is possible to suffer from more than one eating disorder at a time.

## HOW CAN I HELP?

Remember, you can't solve the situation for your friend. But here are some things you can do that are helpful for both of you:

- **ASK.** You can let your friend know that you've noticed sudden changes in their weight or behavior, and that you're concerned about them. This might provide them with an opportunity to share their struggle with someone else and/or acknowledge their need for help. If they deny that a problem exists, let them know that you're available to help them if they decide that an issue does, in fact, exist.
- **LISTEN AND BELIEVE.** If they agree that they need help and begin to share their issue with you, let them talk; don't be judgmental, interrupt, or give advice. Just sitting and listening to your friend can reassure them that you care and are there for them. Be patient; sharing about an eating disorder can be difficult and scary.
- **OFFER TO HELP FIND APPROPRIATE RESOURCES FOR YOUR FRIEND.** Ask your friend what they need. For example, they may ask for your help in searching the web for information, or ask you to accompany them on their first visit to a counselor. Be clear about setting your limits about what you can and can't do. Setting limits supports and empowers both of you.
- **FIND SOME OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF WHILE YOU HELP YOUR FRIEND.** Helping a friend in crisis can be difficult. It's possible for you to have strong emotional reactions to the situation as well. The following resources are good places to go for more information and help for both of you.

## RESOURCES

- **Association for Body Image & Disordered Eating (ABIDE)** | [abide.ucdavis.edu](http://abide.ucdavis.edu)
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** (530) 752-0871 | [caps.ucdavis.edu](http://caps.ucdavis.edu)
- **The House Peer Counseling** (530) 752-2790 | [thehouse.ucdavis.edu](http://thehouse.ucdavis.edu)
- **National Eating Disorders Association** (800) 931-2237 | [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)
- **Anorexia, Bulimia & Compulsive Overeating** (866) 690-7239 | [something-fishy.org](http://something-fishy.org)
- **Student Health Services** (530) 752-2300 | [shcs.ucdavis.edu](http://shcs.ucdavis.edu)
- **Summit Eating Disorder & Outreach Program** (916) 574-1000 | [www.sedop.org](http://www.sedop.org)
- **Women's Resources and Research Center** (530) 752-3372 | [wrrc.ucdavis.edu](http://wrrc.ucdavis.edu)
- **Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual Resource Center** (530) 752-2452 | [lgbtcenter.ucdavis.edu](http://lgbtcenter.ucdavis.edu)
- **Academic & Staff Assistance Program** (530) 752-2727 | [www.hr.ucdavis.edu/worklife-wellness/ASAP](http://www.hr.ucdavis.edu/worklife-wellness/ASAP)

## BOOKS from the WOMEN'S RESOURCES AND RESEARCH CENTER LIBRARY

- *A Hunger So Wide and So Deep: A Multiracial View Of Women's Eating Problems Treating and Overcoming Anorexia Nervosa (Thompson) 1982*
- *The beginner's guide to eating disorders recovery (Kolodny) 2004*
- *Feeding the starving mind: a personalized, comprehensive approach to overcoming anorexia & other starvation eating disorders (Samelson) 2009*
- *If You Think You Have an Eating Disorder (Barnhill) 1998*
- *Perfect girls, starving daughters: the frightening new normalcy of hating your body (Martin) 2007*
- *Talking to Eating Disorders: Simple Ways to Support Someone with Anorexia, Bulimia, Binge Eating, Or Body Image Issues (Heaton) 2005*
- *Why Can't I Stop Eating? Recognizing, Understanding and Overcoming Food Addiction (Danowski) 2000*

If you'd like to read more about body image & eating disorders, visit the WRRC Library, where these books, and others are available. You can also browse the library catalog online at [wrrclibrary.ucdavis.edu](http://wrrclibrary.ucdavis.edu)



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