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HOW YOU CAN HELP SOMEONE WHO IS EXPERIENCING AN EATING DISORDER

When first approaching someone you think may be struggling with an eating disorder, it is important to remember that they may not welcome your expression of concern and may react with anger or denial. This is their prerogative so be prepared for this and treat them gently, with respect and compassion. They'll discuss things with you when they're ready. They may feel more apt to do so if they know you care and want to help and that you're not going to force them to do anything before they're ready.

Intervention Checklist:

- ✓ Learn more about eating disorders and their warning signs. Find out what resources are available in your community.
- ✓ Pick a time when you're feeling calm and can speak in private without being interrupted.
- ✓ Think about what you want to say and how you want to say it beforehand. Examine why you're raising the issue.
- ✓ Let the person know you're worried about him or her in an honest and non-threatening way.
- ✓ Use "I" statements.
- ✓ State your feelings, i.e. "I get really worried when..."
- ✓ Be specific, describe the person's behaviour and give concrete examples.
- ✓ Keep the focus on feeling healthy – physically, emotionally, and not on weight.

Remember:

- Have patience. Eating disorders can take a long time to resolve. Remember that you can't make someone get better. Don't blame the person for what is happening.
- Examine your own attitudes towards weight, shape and size.
- Get support for yourself – a friend, helpful books, a support or self-help group.
- Know your limits and don't get involved in offering "therapeutic" advice. You don't want to be a substitute for professional care.
- Don't try to force or tempt him or her to eat.
- Early intervention increases the likelihood of a faster recovery with few relapses.

Watching someone you care about hurt himself or herself can be frightening. You may experience distress, anger, guilt and confusion. No matter how much you want to help them, remember that only they can make the decision to get help.

Maintain hope. Recovery is possible.

