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## HOW CAN YOU PLAY A ROLE IN PRIMARY PREVENTION?

- Avoid anticipating someone's needs – ask them instead.
- Be a role model.
- Be informed and aware of warning signs. Learn about eating disorders, weight preoccupation and body image issues and avoid, at all costs, simplistic explanations about their "cause".
- Try and see disordered eating as a coping mechanism for deeper negative feelings of self-worth and low self-esteem.
- Understand that the idea of what causes eating disorders has changed - there is not one cause and not one personality type that is predisposed to eating disorders.
- Be compassionate and forthright.
- Do not comment on someone's weight and looks - very often their threshold for criticism is very low.
- Learn how to validate/compliment without directing those compliments at looks, etc.
- Accept the other person's right to make decisions independently - don't take charge of the situation.
- Avoid purchasing foods solely to accommodate the individual with the eating disorder or weight preoccupation (i.e., try not to rescue).
- Avoid making meal times a battleground (you'll always lose!)
- Let the individual be responsible for him/herself and avoid monitoring the individual's behaviour.
- Have resources, articles, people to talk to, guest speaker, movies, slide shows, etc. available for youth who need/want to know more about the topic.
- Don't wait until there is a full-blown issue with an individual before starting to have activities based on this theme.
- Consider that body image issues are part of most young women and some young men's experience - this topic will interest them.
- Never assume that someone who is thin, or picky, or eats very little, or eats a lot, or talks about food and weight, has an eating disorder.
- Never, never, never label anyone "The Bulimic" or "The Anorexic." At best, even if they do have an identified eating disorder, they are individuals experiencing bulimia or anorexia, and even then, everyone has a name - labels are best not used at all.
- Don't diagnose! Deciding whether an individual has an eating disorder is not your responsibility - leave this to the professionals. • Accept your limitations.

