

## Do's and Don'ts

For Family Members and Friends of Individuals with Eating Disorders

**DO** Realize there is not a quick and easy solution.

**DO** Talk to the person about your concerns, ask questions and listen.

**DO** Express your feelings honestly with the person; they sense how you are feeling anyway.

**DO** let the person know the qualities and characteristics (other than physical) that you appreciate about them.

**DO** Plan social activities that do not involve food.

**DO** Empower the individual to make their own decisions and be accountable for these decisions.

**DO** Allow the person to be in charge of their daily routines, realizing that by giving up control, you are setting the stage for the person to develop healthy self-control.

**DO** Encourage the person to get a professional assessment from a practitioner experienced in treating eating disorders.

**DO** Realize the person may be ambivalent about getting well and takes comfort and feels safe in the control and rituals of the disorder.

**DO** Express that you care and are interested in seeing the person get well.

**DO** Inform yourself about eating disorders and the treatment options, attend support groups and read current literature.



**DON'T** Ever give up; this is a long-term illness and people recover everyday.

**DON'T** Ignore the problem, hoping it will away; talk about it.

**DON'T** Panic. Seek the support you need.

**DON'T** Assume there isn't a problem if the individual doesn't show physical symptoms.

**DON'T** Force the person to eat or tell them to "just eat."

**DON'T** Make your love a condition of the individual's appearance, health, weight, achievements or any other attribute.

**DON'T** Comment positively or negatively on an individual's appearance or weight.

**DON'T** Feel you must walk on "eggshells" so the person with the eating disorder won't be upset.

**DON'T** Let the eating disorder disrupt family routines.

**DON'T** Be manipulative. Be direct with your feelings and experiences.

**DON'T** Try to control the person's behavior as this can intensify the problem.

**DON'T** Impose rules, except those that are necessary for the individual's or family's safety and well-being. Avoid power struggles.

**DON'T** Blame yourself, feel guilty or dwell on the causes of the individual's eating disorder.

**DON'T** Tell the anorexic who has gained weight they look better.

**DON'T** Expect yourself to be the perfect parent, family member or friend.