



# HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

*who has an*

# EATING DISORDER

## WHAT IS AN EATING DISORDER?

An eating disorder is extreme thoughts, emotions or attitudes about food, body and/or shape. Often it is a dangerous response to psychological and/or emotional stress in the person's life. 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 to get 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; try to avoid being 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 in what ways you can help. 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 too. The following resources are good places to go for more information and help for both of you.

## RESOURCES

- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** 847.491.2151 | [northwestern.edu/counseling](http://northwestern.edu/counseling)
- **University Police (Emergency):** 911 | [northwestern.edu/up/](http://northwestern.edu/up/)
- **University Police (Non-Emergency):** Evanston – 847.491.3456; Chicago – 312.503.3456
- **Health Service – Evanston:** 847.491.8100 | [nuhs.northwestern.edu/evanston/](http://nuhs.northwestern.edu/evanston/)
- **Health Service – Chicago:** 312.695.8134 | [www-chicago.nuhs.northwestern.edu/](http://www-chicago.nuhs.northwestern.edu/)
- **Women’s Center – Evanston:** 847.491.7360 – **Chicago:** 312.503.3400 | [northwestern.edu/womencenter/](http://northwestern.edu/womencenter/)
- **LGBT Support Network:** 847.491.4522 | [northwestern.edu/lgbt/](http://northwestern.edu/lgbt/)
- **African-American Student Affairs:** 847.491.3610 | [northwestern.edu/aasa/](http://northwestern.edu/aasa/)
- **Asian/Asian-American Student Services:** 847.467.7583 | [northwestern.edu/asian-american/](http://northwestern.edu/asian-american/)
- **Dean of Students Office:** 847.491.8430 | [northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/](http://northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/)
- **Graduate Housing:** 847.491.5127 | [northwestern.edu/gradhousing/](http://northwestern.edu/gradhousing/)
- **Hispanic/Latino Student Services:** 847.467.7337 | [northwestern.edu/latino/](http://northwestern.edu/latino/)
- **International Office:** 847.491.5613 | [northwestern.edu/international/](http://northwestern.edu/international/)
- **Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life:** 847.491.4522 | [northwestern.edu/gogreek/](http://northwestern.edu/gogreek/)
- **Chaplain's Office:** 847.491.7256 | [northwestern.edu/chaplain/](http://northwestern.edu/chaplain/)
- **Services for Students With Disabilities:** 847.467.5530 | [northwestern.edu/disability/](http://northwestern.edu/disability/)
- **Undergraduate Housing:** 847.491.7564 | [northwestern.edu/housing/](http://northwestern.edu/housing/)
- **University Residential Life:** 847.491.3541 | [northwestern.edu/reslife/](http://northwestern.edu/reslife/)
- **National Eating Disorders Association:** [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org)
- [something-fishy.org](http://something-fishy.org)

## BOOKS

*Anorexia Nervosa: A Guide for Sufferer's and their Families (Palmer) 1983*  
*If You Think You Have an Eating Disorder (Barnhill) 1998*  
*Overcoming Eating Disorders: Recovery from Anorexia, Bulimia, and Compulsive Overeating (Zraly) 1992*  
*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*  
*A Hunger So Wide and So Deep: A Multiracial View of Women's Eating Problems Treating and Overcoming Anorexia Nervosa (Levenkron) 1982*



**Counseling and Psychological Services**  
**Northwestern University**  
**(847) 491-2151**  
**[www.northwestern.edu/counseling/](http://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/)**