



NEDA TOOLKIT for Parents

How to be supportive



RECOMMENDED DOS

- Educate yourself on eating disorders; learn the jargon
- Learn the differences between facts and myths about weight, nutrition, and exercise
- Ask what you can do to help
- Listen openly and reflectively
- Be patient and nonjudgmental
- Talk with the person in a kind way when you are calm and not angry, frustrated, or upset
- Have compassion when the person brings up painful issues about underlying problems
- Let him/her know you only want the best for him/her
- Remind the person that he/she has people who care and support him/her
- Suggest professional help in a gentle way
- Offer to go along
- Be flexible and open with your support
- Be honest
- Compliment the person's personality, successes, and accomplishments
- Encourage all activities suggested by the treating care team, such as keeping appointments and medication compliance
- Encourage social activities that don't involve food
- Encourage the person to buy foods that he/she will want to eat (as opposed to only "healthy" foods)
- Help the person to be patient
- Help with the person's household chores (e.g., laundry, cleaning) as needed
- Remember: recovery takes time and food may always be a difficult issue
- Remember: recovery work is up to the affected person
- Show care, concern, and understanding
- Ask how he/she is feeling
- Try to be a good role model
- Understand that the person is not looking for attention or pity

RECOMMENDED DON'TS

- Accuse or cause feelings of guilt
- Invade privacy and contact the patient's doctors or others to check up behind his/her back
- Demand weight changes (even if clinically necessary for health)
- Insist the person eat every type of food at the table
- Invite the person out for social occasions where the main focus is food
- Invite the person to go clothes shopping
- Make eating, food, clothes, or appearance the focus of conversation
- Make promises or rules you cannot or will not follow (e.g., promising not to tell anyone)
- Threaten (e.g., if you do this once more I'll...)
- Offer more help than you are qualified to give
- Create guilt or place blame on the person
- Put timetables on recovery
- Take the person's actions personally
- Try to change the person's attitudes about eating or nag about food
- Try to control the person's life
- Use scare tactics to get the person into treatment, but do call 911 if you believe the person's condition is life-threatening