



# NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY AS A CAREGIVER

Your **loved one** has an **Eating Disorder** diagnosis.

## *What's next?*

### **Behaviors and Challenges You May Recognize**

Eating disorders are a group of psychiatric disorder characterized by extreme emotions, thoughts, and behaviors about food and body image. It can be challenging to support a loved one living with an eating disorder as eating disorders are usually extremely private for the person struggling. Living with an eating disorder is a constant emotional and mental uphill battle, in addition to the resulting health struggles. Your loved one is likely going through a lot.

They may be experiencing:

- Feeling embarrassment, insecurity and dislike towards their appearance
- Constant contagious illnesses due to weakened immune system
- Fatigue and poor sleep due to lack of nutrition
- High stress when encountering certain foods or conversational topics
- Feeling extremely affected by media
- Encountering enabling or encouragement from ED communities
- Intense mental preoccupation with meal planning or nutrition tracking
- Cycles of shame, guilt, and regret around extreme eating habits
- Bodily damage such as in the liver, teeth, esophagus, or hairline

This journey of navigating your loved one's eating disorder diagnosis may look daunting at first. Yet, it can help to shift that compass and look at this journey as an opportunity for GROWTH. On this journey, you can NURTURE your relationship with your loved one AND yourself.

### **Supporting Your Loved One**

You and your loved one are embarking on a growth journey and will navigate their diagnosis TOGETHER. Be PATIENT with your loved one AND yourself as you learn which coping strategies are most helpful.

The greatest gift we can give our loved ones is ACCEPTANCE of what they are going through in the moment. To help them you can also practice boundary-setting, utilize outside help, and take care of YOU! It will empower you BOTH on this journey for you to give yourself love and rest. YOU will be more able to give the care they need and THEY will witness your self-care example.

You can also provide your loved with resources. *See the next page for ways to help manage eating disorders.*

**If you are currently experiencing a crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741-741.**

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## Resources for You and Your Loved One

- The **National Institute of Mental Health** on eating disorders
- The **National Alliance on Mental Illness** on eating disorders
- Information on eating disorders from **Mental Health America**
- The **National Eating Disorder Association (NEDA)** helpline and chat line
- Support groups and peer mentoring from the **National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders**
- Information and resources on bulimia nervosa by **BulimiaGuide**
- An overview of drunkorexia by **Recovery Connection**
- Information on orthorexia (obsessive health eating) from **NEDA**
- Advice for loved ones and caregivers from the **Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness**
- **Recovery Warriors**: a comprehensive resource website
- **Fighting Eating Disorders in Underrepresented Populations (FEDUP)**: a trans & intersex collective
- Coping, body positivity, and mindfulness worksheets for eating disorders by **We Bite Back**
- The **National Eating Disorder Association**'s overview of binge eating disorder
- Tips for siblings from **Eating Disorders Victoria**
- Resources for parents and caregivers from **NEDA**
- How to find the right eating disorder therapist from **EDReferral.com**
- **Eating Disorder Hope** on how LGBTQ+ persons are affected by eating disorders

## Preventing Caregiver Burnout

We give our BEST care when we are also taking care of ourselves! Make time to recharge, even with a short moment that's just for YOU. Connecting with other caregivers is another powerful form of self-care. Learn more about our One-to-One Caregiver Peer Support program on **our website**.

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