

Approaching and Helping a Person You "Suspect" May Have an Eating Disorder

Always remember that eating disordered behaviors are not about vanity. They arise from problems such as low self-esteem. Be supportive and caring.

Also remember that this person may try to deny the problem. Do not get angry or frustrated. Be respectful and understand that she/he may be afraid to face the problem.

Some Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Prepare yourself by identifying your specific concerns. What behaviors are you seeing that concern you?
- Speak to this person privately.
- Approach this person in a non-confrontational way by:
 - Using “I” statements (e.g., I’m concerned about you because you are exercising 3 hours every day)
 - Avoiding accusational “You” statements. (e.g., You have to stop this... You’re out of control)
 - Avoid giving simple solutions. (e.g., If you’d just take off for a few weeks, everything would be fine)
- In a calm and caring way, talk about specific things you see or feel.

- Allow this person time to respond. Listen carefully and do not be judgmental.
- Keep the focus on the problems.
- If this person responds in a way that leads you to believe she/he has an eating disorder tell her/him:
 - You think she/he has a problem with body image or weight management
 - You are concerned about her/his health and well being, and that you care and would like to help
 - You believe the matter needs to be evaluated by someone who understands eating disorders. Suggest that she/he talk to the nutritionist (Karen K. Fiorenza, RD, LDN, ext 0348) or the counseling center (ext 2301).

Don'ts

- Don't confront this person with a group of people
- Don't diagnose
- Don't be deceived by this person's excuses or rationalizations
- Don't let this person manipulate you and monopolize all of your time and energy.