

# SUPPORT TIPS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF PEOPLE STRUGGLING WITH EATING DISORDERS

- ⊙ **BE PATIENT** - eating disorders can be a long-term illness. You cannot expect over- night recovery even if the person is in therapy.
- ⊙ Encourage the person to **SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP**. If the individual is truly endangering his/her life by their eating disorder be insistent.
- ⊙ Seek outside **HELP FOR YOURSELF**. Find a family/friend, support group, a counsellor, or other professional who has experiencing helping families and friends cope with an eating disorder sufferer.
- ⊙ When discussing the problem with a person you suspect has an eating disorder, (especially if it is for the first time) don't be surprised if the reaction is one of **DENIAL** or perhaps even **HOSTILITY**.
- ⊙ **DON'T LAY BLAME**. This only re-enforces the person's feelings of failure.
- ⊙ Try to ensure that you don't allow the person's problems to interfere with your **ROUTINE FUNCTIONING**. Let the person know that he/she is **IMPORTANT** to the family but not more so than any other family member.
- ⊙ **DON'T DWELL** on food related discussions. Encourage the person to get involved with **NON-FOOD RELATED ACTIVITIES**.
- ⊙ **AVOID** commenting on their **WEIGHT OR APPEARANCE** - your comments may not be taken in the proper context.
- ⊙ The person with an eating disorder must feel that he/she has **CONTROL** over his/her daily routine. This can be very frustrating for those around the individual, but the situation often only becomes worse when it is perceived that someone else is trying to take that control away.
- ⊙ Be aware that **LOW SELF-ESTEEM** is often a problem for those with eating disorders. Be careful not to make comparisons.
- ⊙ **LEARN ABOUT EATING DISORDERS. UNDERSTANDING IS THE KEY TO COPING.**