

Tips for talking to someone with an eating disorder

Talking to someone about their eating disorder can be very difficult, especially if they still can't accept that they have a problem. However, communication is essential to help with recovery, so keep trying.

When you want to talk to them directly about the eating disorder, Susan Ringwood advises that you:

- Prepare what to say.
- Don't blame or judge.
- Concentrate on how they're feeling.
- Stay calm.
- Have resources to refer to.
- Be prepared for a negative response.

It can also help to:

- Learn as much as possible about [eating disorders](#). It helps you understand what you're dealing with.
- Emphasise that no matter what, you love them and will always be there for them.
- Avoid talking about their appearance, even if it is meant as a compliment. Try to build their confidence in other ways – for example, by praising them for being thoughtful or congratulating them on an achievement.
- Avoid talking about other people's diets or weight problems.
- Talk to them about the range of professional help available, and say that you'll support them through it when they're ready.
- Talk positively about activities they could be involved in that don't involve food, such as hobbies and days out with friends.
- Try not to feel hurt if they don't open up to you straight away, and don't resent them for being secretive. This is due to their illness, not their relationship with you.
- Ask them what you can do to help.
- Try to be honest about your own feelings. This will encourage them to do the same.
- Remember that the feelings behind the eating disorder may be really difficult for them to express. Try to be patient and listen to what they're trying to say.
- Be a good role model by eating a [balanced diet](#) and taking a healthy amount of exercise.
- Try to use sentences starting with "I", such as "I'm worried because you don't seem happy", rather than sentences beginning with "you".
- Your child may come across as angry and aggressive, but bear in mind that they may actually be feeling fearful and insecure.