

Reaching Out to Someone Who May Have an Eating Disorder

Some Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- Learn about eating disorders so that you will know the signs when you see them.
- Recognize that eating disorders are potentially fatal diseases and treat them accordingly.
- Listen to your friend with understanding, respect and sensitivity.
- Tell the person that you are concerned, that you care and would like to help.
- Suggest that the person seek professional help from a physician and/or therapist.
- Be available when your friend needs someone.
- Talk about things other than food, weight, counting calories and exercise. Attempt to discuss feelings instead.
- Share your own struggles.
- Don't take any action alone. Get help.
- Stay calm. These things take time. If frustrated, take a break and plan to resume the discussion at a later time.

DON'T:

- Don't try to solve the problem for them. They need a qualified professional.
- Don't blame them for doing something wrong or tell them they are acting silly.
- Don't gossip about them.
- Don't focus on weight, the number of calories being consumed or particular eating habits.
- Don't make comments about a person's appearance. Concern about weight loss may be interpreted as a compliment and comments about weight gain may be seen as criticism.
- Don't be afraid to upset them; talk to them.
- Don't reject or ignore them; they need you.
- Don't get involved in a power struggle around eating or other symptoms.

For more information about food, weight or body-image issues, please contact The Renfrew Center Foundation at 1-877-367-3383 or visit www.renfrew.org.