

# Supporting Adults with Eating Disorders

@eatingdisorderstrainingaust

This handout provides some information about things that can be helpful and unhelpful when you are supporting someone in their recovery from an eating disorder. Being a support person can be hard - take care of yourself, try not to worry if you are doing some of the 'don'ts' below as many are common but making changes can certainly make a big difference in your loved one's life.

## DO's

Offer support - ask your loved one what they need from you. A listening ear? Help to work through problems? Company at meal times? Company to distract and feel connected?

Try and connect emotionally - what might this feel like for your loved one? Believe what they say and that they need what they ask for.

Check in with your loved one - "How are you feeling?" "What do you need today - how could I be of help?" Or notice how they seem to be feeling - "you seem worried, would you like to talk about it?"

Talk about different topics, conversation starters, current event, interests - things that you might have in common but have nothing to do with eating, weight, shape etc.

Provide feedback and positive reinforcement about non-ED related things (e.g., it is so lovely to spend time with you... I enjoy talking about books with you...)

## DON'Ts

Make comments about weight, shape, appearance diets and changes to eating (yours or others). Don't encourage or compliment weight loss/changes in weight - this is very important.

Label foods as 'good and bad' or make comments such as 'healthy and unhealthy'. Food is not moral and all food is okay. Don't go on a diet - this can be very triggering.

Encourage exercise or other modes of 'controlling' weight. It can be helpful to examine your own beliefs and hear what your loved one has to say.

Promote the idea that thinner bodies are better bodies. Spend some time examining your own beliefs around this and how you might be able to make some changes here.

Forsake your own self-care. It is important to continue to take care of you, set healthy boundaries and ensure you are looked after too.