

## DID YOU KNOW...

- 28.8 million Americans will experience an eating disorder in their lifetime.
- Eating disorders are not choices, but serious biologically-influenced illnesses with a genetic component.
- It is estimated that between 28-74% of the risk for developing an eating disorder is through genetic heritability.
- Social and environmental factors such as bullying, social media, trauma, or onset of other mental illnesses can impact eating disorder development.
- Eating disorders affect people of all genders, ages, races, ethnicities, body shapes and weights, physical and neurological abilities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses.
- Less than 6% of people with eating disorders are medically diagnosed as “underweight.”
- Eating disorders carry an increased risk for both suicide and medical complications. Every 52 minutes someone dies as a direct result of an eating disorder.
- Families can be the patients’ and providers’ best allies in treatment.
- Full recovery from an eating disorder is possible. Early detection, intervention, and access to treatment are important.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Alliance for Eating Disorders  
Phone: (866) 662-1235  
[www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com](http://www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com)  
[www.findEDhelp.com](http://www.findEDhelp.com)

## ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

The National Alliance for Eating Disorders (formerly The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness) is the leading national non-profit organization providing education, referrals, and support for all individuals (and their loved ones) experiencing eating disorders. Founded in October 2000, The Alliance has worked tirelessly to support eating disorder awareness and education, promote and provide access to care, offer comprehensive services such as support groups and outpatient care, and eliminate the shame and stigma associated with eating disorders.

The Alliance’s services include:

- Referrals through a therapist-staffed helpline and comprehensive referral website/app, [findEDhelp.com](http://findEDhelp.com).
- Free, weekly, therapist-led support groups offered nationwide both virtually and in-person.
- Educational presentations to schools, communities, and agencies.
- Continuing education to healthcare providers and hospitals.
- Low-cost, life-saving, outpatient treatment to adults living in South Florida who are uninsured or underinsured.
- Unique and empowering scale smashing events and SmashTALK panel discussions aimed at college and university students.
- Advocacy for eating disorders and mental health legislation.

The Alliance understands that eating disorders are often impacted by a number of social, economic, and environmental factors. Using a Health at Every Size® framework, The Alliance aims to create an inclusive, culturally competent, and supportive space that acknowledges the multitude of factors that contribute to eating disorders.

**NATIONAL ALLIANCE**  
for Eating Disorders

# FOR LOVED ONES

If your loved one is experiencing an eating disorder, know that full recovery is possible. Early detection, intervention, and access to treatment are important.

[www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com](http://www.allianceforeatingdisorders.com)  
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# TIPS FOR LOVED ONES

Eating disorders affect not only the individual who is suffering, but also those around them. You may want to help a loved one, but are met with anger, frustration, denial, or avoidance. If your loved one displays signs and symptoms of an eating disorder, seek help immediately. Early intervention greatly increases the likelihood of recovery.

It is also important that you get help and support for yourself. Please consider attending family therapy and/or a family and friends support group. It is crucial that you maintain your physical and emotional health so you can help your loved one when they need you.

## HOW TO HELP A LOVED ONE

### DO

- Learn about eating disorders.
- Find an appropriate time and place to talk to the individual in private.
- Communicate your concerns using “I” statements.
- Stress the importance of professional and specialized help.
- Take care of your own mental, physical, and emotional health.
- Validate your loved one’s feelings, struggles, and accomplishments and express your support.

### DON'T

- Don't be scared to have a hard conversation.
- Don't engage in a power struggle.
- Don't attempt to solve or “fix” their problems.
- Don't promise to keep it a secret.

# IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS IN RECOVERY

1. Validation and compassion are key! Validate their fears and struggles without judgment.
2. Have the ability to incorporate love and fun into the recovery process. Spend “recovery free” time with your loved one.
3. Focus on the person, not the eating disorder. They are not their eating disorder.
4. Remind your loved one that they are not alone—be inclusive, not exclusive.
5. Understand that the eating disorder did not happen overnight, nor will recovery. Progress, not perfection, is key.
6. There is no “perfect” recovery. Recovery is a process and may be two steps forward, one step back. Be adaptable.
7. Don't tip-toe around your loved one—be real and honest, but not pushy. Remember to listen.
8. Slips and falls will happen—acknowledge them but don't catastrophize them. Every time they pick themselves up they will get stronger.
9. Triggering people, places, and things will emerge—be there for support.
10. Ask your loved one what they need from you—be their ally on their journey to recovery.
11. You are an asset to your loved one's recovery. You know them well; don't be afraid to utilize your intuition.
12. Take care of yourself so you can take care of your loved one.

# REMEMBER...

- Your loved one didn't choose to develop an eating disorder - it's a biologically-based mental health disorder.
- Model a healthful relationship with food and body. Avoid dieting or using food as a reward or a positive reinforcement. There are no “good” or “bad” foods.
- Avoid statements about weight, body shape, and size. Focus on the functions of the body, not size or appearance.
- Teach your loved one to listen to their own hunger.
- Compliment loved ones on their talents, accomplishments, and values.
- You didn't cause it and you can learn not to contribute to it. You can't control it. You can't cure it. But you can be a support.
- Recovery is a process that isn't linear.
- Focus on responding instead of reacting. Take time to reflect if you need to or reach out to others for love and support.
- You don't need to fully understand the disease, but you can be there and be present.

## GETTING HELP

If you think you or someone you know may be experiencing an eating disorder, please seek specialized, professional help as soon as possible.

For more information on how to receive help, please visit [findEDhelp.com](http://findEDhelp.com), [allianceforeatingdisorders.com](http://allianceforeatingdisorders.com), or call us at 866-662-1235.