

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND*

- Do:**
- Learn about eating disorders so that you will know the signs when you see them.
 - Recognize that eating disorders are potentially fatal diseases; treat them accordingly.
 - Listen to your friend with understanding, respect and sensitivity.
 - Be consistent; insist that your friend needs help; provide your friend with a list of sources of professional help.
 - Be available when your friend needs someone; be supportive.
 - Share your own emotions and struggles with another if you feel the need.
 - Focus on your friend's unhappiness as the reason s/he could benefit from help.
- Don't:**
- Take any action alone; get help.
 - Try to solve your friend's problem for him/her; your friend needs a qualified professional.
 - Blame your friend for doing something wrong or tell your friend s/he is acting silly.
 - Gossip about your friend.
 - Be afraid to upset your friend; talk with him/her.
 - Reject or ignore your friend; s/he needs you.
 - Be deceived by your friend's excuses.
 - Talk about your friend's eating habits.

CONFRONTING SOMEONE YOU FEEL HAS AN EATING DISORDER**

When confronting a person with an eating disorder, it is important to have a plan. A confrontation can be difficult due to denial seen in those with the problem. However, if a person does deny the problem, the initial seed has been planted. At some point in the future, the problem will be recognized and admitted. The following outline is helpful to use when confronting someone.

- Concern:** The reason you are doing the confronting. You care about the mental, physical and nutritional needs of the person.
- Organize:** Decide WHO is involved, WHERE to confront, WHY concern, HOW to talk, WHEN - a convenient time.
- Needs:** What will the person need after the confrontation? Professional help and/or support groups need to be available.
- Face:** The actual confrontation. Be empathetic but direct. Do not back down if the person initially denies the problem.
- Respond:** By listening carefully.
- Offer:** Help and suggestions. You may want to encourage the person to contact you when s/he needs someone to talk.
- Negotiate:** Another time to talk and a time span to seek professional help.
- Time:** Remember to stress that recovery takes time and patience. However, the person has a lot to gain by the process and, also, a lot to lose if s/he chooses to remain with these behaviors.

*Adapted from "Food for Thought," Randolph-Macon Women's College.

** This plan has been written and explained at lectures given by Heather L. Howard, former Administrator for ANAD, Highland Park, IL.