

# Caregiver DOs and DON'Ts

## DOs

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- ✓ DO realize there is not a quick and easy solution.
- ✓ DO talk to your loved one about your concerns; ask questions and listen.
- ✓ DO honestly express your feelings with your loved one.
- ✓ DO genuinely let your loved one know which qualities/characteristics (other than physical) you appreciate about them.
- ✓ DO plan social activities that do not involve food.
- ✓ DO encourage your loved one to trust and follow the advice of their treatment team.
- ✓ DO allow your loved one to provide input regarding daily routines, reminding them to align their ideas with their treatment plan.
- ✓ DO encourage your loved one to discuss concerns around the meal plan and/or daily routine with their treatment team.
- ✓ DO encourage your loved one to remain consistent with their treatment appointments. Create a team that consists of eating disorder specialists.
- ✓ DO realize your loved one may feel ambivalent about getting well.
- ✓ DO realize your loved one takes comfort and feels safe in the control and rituals of the disorder without commenting on it.
- ✓ DO express interest in your loved one's recovery journey.
- ✓ DO inform yourself about the eating disorder and its treatment, attend support groups and read current literature.
- ✓ DO realize that eating disorders are rarely just about food.
- ✓ DO understand that lying is a result of shame and a part of the eating disorder; your loved one may deeply regret being dishonest.
- ✓ DO express gratitude for each other.
- ✓ DO model normal eating behavior.
- ✓ DO realize that mealtimes and the period immediately after can be especially stressful.
- ✓ DO separate your loved one from their eating disorder. They have an eating disorder; they are not their eating disorder.
- ✓ DO take care of yourself. You need rest and rejuvenation to better support your loved one.

# DON'Ts

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- ⊗ DON'T ever give up. Continue to offer support and know that recovery is possible.
- ⊗ DON'T ignore behaviors. Validate and offer emotional and practical support.
- ⊗ DON'T assign moral value to food or use diet culture language.
- ⊗ DON'T discuss financial costs; this can make your loved one feel like a burden.
- ⊗ DON'T panic; seek support from the community, support groups or your loved one's treatment team.
- ⊗ DON'T assume there isn't a problem if your loved one doesn't show physical symptoms.
- ⊗ DON'T take on the role of registered dietitian. Refer to the treatment plan for suggestions on how to support your loved one and, if possible, check with the treatment team for additional ideas.
- ⊗ DON'T make your love conditional on your loved one's appearance, health, weight, achievements or any other attribute.
- ⊗ DON'T comment positively or negatively on appearance or weight.
- ⊗ DON'T feel you need to walk on eggshells. Work with the treatment team to learn effective communication skills.
- ⊗ Don't let the eating disorder disrupt family routines. Take your lead from the treatment team on how to adjust schedules and routines so that your loved one feels supported in recovery.
- ⊗ DON'T try to control your loved one's behavior, as it can lead to conflict.
- ⊗ DON'T focus all your attention on the meal during mealtimes. Engage in enjoyable conversations while offering support around the meal when needed.
- ⊗ DON'T blame yourself, feel guilty or dwell on what caused your loved one's eating disorder.
- ⊗ DON'T expect to be a perfect caregiver, family member or friend.

To learn about free community resources and education, email [Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM](mailto:Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM)

Contact us to schedule a free consultation with a master's-level clinician. [1-877-825-8584](tel:1-877-825-8584) | [EatingRecovery.com](http://EatingRecovery.com)