

Eating Disorders: Tips for Adults and Teens

Developed in collaboration with the mental health centers of NBHP and FBHP & the Client and Family Advisory Board

- 1. Recovery is possible. Participate in your treatment.** You are the expert about yourself. Be actively involved in defining what you want out of treatment, by setting individual treatment goals and attending appointments. Practice the skills you learn in treatment. Since most teens still live with their parents or other adults, treatment often includes these adults. Let your therapist and/or prescriber know if you want some time to talk with them alone.
- 2. Talk to people you trust.** This could be a family member, friend, counselor, teacher, or coach. Let them know how you are feeling and how they can help you. You may be struggling with things besides your eating. It is important to talk about these issues too.
- 3. Pay attention to your feelings and ask for help** if you start feeling depressed or anxious. Many people who have an eating disorder also feel depressed or nervous from time to time. This is common and you are not alone. How do your feelings impact your eating habits?
- 4. Involve and get support from family.** Many times, involving family members in therapy can be extremely beneficial.
- 5. Join a self-help group** that is mediated by a professional or a mentor who is knowledgeable about eating disorder recovery.
- 6. Engage in healthy activities** that you enjoy and that increase your self-esteem. Care about yourself. Exercise for fun, not to lose calories. Make sure to eat before and after exercise because your body needs the energy. Include others in these activities.
- 7. Increase opportunities to have more choice.** Talk with your family about the areas of your life where you would like to make more decisions. Notice where you can make positive choices that help you feel confident.
- 8. Notice what happens when you compare yourself to others or media.** How do you feel when this happens? How does it affect your behavior? These may be topics to discuss in therapy.
- 9. Explore non-food related coping strategies**, and ways of feeling better when problems arise:
 - Journal about positive things in your life. Try to be aware and notice meaningful and valuable experiences you have.
 - Make a small goal for yourself each week. Be proactive and take control of making changes in your life.
 - If you feel the urge to binge or purge, take a few minutes to identify the feelings, without trying to change them. You can always choose to binge later.
- 10. Educate yourself.** Learn about how certain behaviors, such as vomiting or laxative use, can affect your physical health (see resources below.) If you are already having health problems, talk to your doctor about the best treatment approach.

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Resources for Adults and Teens

“Life without ED” Jenni Schaefer, 2003

National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) 800-931-2237

<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/>

The Eating Disorder Foundation, Colorado

<http://www.eatingdisorderfoundation.org/index.htm>

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders

<http://www.anad.org/>

Cooper, P.J. (1995) *Bulimia Nervosa: A Guide to Recovery*. London: Robinson.

Fairburn, C. (1995). *Overcoming Binge Eating*. New York: Guilford Press

Treasure, J. (1997) *Anorexia Nervosa: A Survival Guide for Families, Friends, and Sufferers*. Hove, UK: Psychology Press.