



nutrinews

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Q:

How can I help a friend who may have an eating disorder?

A:

Food and body image thoughts and behaviors span a continuum from “unconcerned” to a diagnosable “eating disorder”. While numerous people become obsessed, relatively few have all of the specific criteria to be diagnosed with an eating disorder. However, the earlier a person gets help dealing with the obsession the less likely it will progress to an eating disorder. And, the sooner a person gets help with an eating disorder, the greater the chance of success for recovery.

It is not easy having a friend, male or female, you feel may be struggling with an obsession or disorder, but it is important

for their health and your relationship that you share your concerns with them.

What to do:

1. If there are several people who are concerned about the friend, pick the one who has the closest relationship to speak with him/her. Group interventions are not a good idea.
2. Write down your specific concerns ahead of time. Think about the impact of your friend’s behaviors on your relationship. Be as direct as possible, using “I” statements that reflect your concern (“I’ve been worried about you, you are so distant.” *Not*, “I think you’re anorexic.”)
3. Don’t talk to your friend when you are

frustrated or angry. If you are frustrated with your friend’s behaviors, get help for yourself first.

4. Pick a time when you can be calm and neither of you will be rushed.
5. Have reasonable expectations of the outcome of your discussion.

What not to do:

1. Don’t make critical comments about your friend’s food, weight, or exercise habits.
2. Don’t become over-involved. Once you let your friend know you’re concerned, let them take charge of their problem. The exception: when you sense the situation is immediately life threatening.

Bottom line – bringing the problem into the open in a calm and caring way can be the first step toward recovery, a process your friend will need to be in charge of his/herself.

The week of **Feb. 27–Mar. 5** is **National Eating Disorders Awareness Week**. Watch for more information around campus on Wed., Feb 23 and Wed., March 2.

For additional info, go to www.health.arizona.edu, click on “On-line Health Library” then go to “Nutrition”. Look under “Food and Body Image Issues”. Also go to www.nationaleatingdisorders.org, click on “Eating Disorders Info”.

For help on campus call Campus Health, Counseling and Psychological Services at 621-3334.

Got a question? email: wildcatnutrition@yahoo.com

Visit our website for more info: www.health.arizona.edu (Go to “On-Line Library” and click on “Nutrition”) • For individual nutrition appointments, call 621-9202. \$25 initial, \$15 follow-up