



# nutrinews

written by Gale Welter, MS, RD, CSCS  
Nutrition Counselor, Campus Health Service



## Does Someone You Care About Have a Problem With Food?

Many UA students are consumed with thoughts about the size or look of his or her body and the food they eat. Food and body image thoughts and behaviors span a continuum from being “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. 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 success of 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, their academic success, 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.

6. Be open to discussing it in the future if your friend is not ready to talk at the present time.

### 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 for which your friend will need to take responsibility.

To learn more, plan to attend *Does Someone You Care About Have a Problem With Food?* Wednesday, October 19, 4-5:30 in the Copper Room, on the 4th floor of the Student Union. This event is free and open to the community.

For additional info go to [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org); click on “Eating Disorders Info.”

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

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