

Caregivers | 10 ACTIONS

- 1 Learn as much as you can about eating disorders and about evidence-based treatment.** Take your place as a vital member of the treatment team; you are the expert on your loved one and you both can and should offer invaluable insight and support.
- 2 Accept that there is no eating disorder stereotype.** Eating disorders affect people of all genders, races, ethnicities, weights, body shapes, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses. It's an equal opportunity, biologically influenced mental disorder. It's not a choice.
- 3 Know that your loved one's physical appearance does not measure the presence or severity of an eating disorder.** Thoughts and behaviors in relation to food, eating, exercise, and other compensatory behaviors offer a more accurate assessment.
- 4 Make sure that your loved one gets a full medical evaluation by an experienced eating disorder professional.** Read the [Academy for Eating Disorders Medical Care Guidelines](#) and take a printout with you to the appointment.
- 5 Always be vigilant. Learn about comorbid conditions and suicide assessment.** Be on the lookout for signs of medical complications and suicidal ideation. These risks can occur at any weight, across the spectrum of eating disorders, and can carry extreme danger. Also, watch for symptoms of relapse.
- 6 Hold firm to what you know about your loved one,** trust your intuition, be an empowered advocate, and push for further diagnostics when you feel that something is wrong.
- 7 Recognize that eating disorders can compromise brain function.** Your loved one may not "buy into" treatment, and that's okay; treatment can still be effective. You may have to make decisions on behalf of the affected person for a while, even when your loved one is an adult.
- 8 Prioritize your love one's recovery.** Your loved one may need to take time off from school, work, and other activities. You may need to temporarily take time off as well in order to focus on their care. An eating disorder is a serious medical crisis that necessitates immediate and full attention. Full nutritional rehabilitation is an absolute priority.
- 9 Make sure that everyone in the family has support.** The ripple effect that eating disorders have on the entire family is exponential. Know that siblings can be good at hiding their suffering so as not to further upset their parents. Caregivers especially need lots of [support](#). Accept the help that you need.
- 10 Hold the vision of your loved one's recovery.** Know that full recovery is possible at any age, even when it may seem improbable, and regardless of the duration of the illness. Understand that recovery is not linear; there are ups and downs. Thoughts and behaviors may persist long after eating and weight are stabilized. Gear up for a marathon, not a sprint.