

What Can You Do to Help Prevent Eating Disorders?



National Eating Disorders Association

- **Learn all you can about anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder.** Genuine awareness will help you avoid judgmental or mistaken attitudes about food, weight, body shape, and eating disorders.
- **Discourage the idea that a particular diet, weight, or body size will automatically lead to happiness and fulfillment.**
- **Choose to challenge the false belief that thinness, weight loss and/or muscularity are desirable,** while body fat and weight gain are shameful, or indicate laziness, worthlessness, or immorality.
- **Avoid categorizing foods as “good/safe” vs. “bad/dangerous.”** Remember, we all need to eat a balanced variety of foods.
- **Decide to avoid judging others and yourself on the basis of body weight or shape.** Turn off the voices in your head that tell you that a person’s body weight or muscularity says anything about their character, personality, or value as a person.
- **Avoid conveying an attitude that says, “I will like you better if you lose weight, don’t eat so much, or change your body shape.”**
- **Become a critical viewer of the media and its messages about self-esteem and body image.** Talk back to the television when you hear a comment or see an image that promotes a certain body ideal at all costs. Rip out (or better yet, write to the editor about) advertisements or articles in magazines that make you feel bad about your body shape or size.
- **If you think someone has an eating disorder, express your concerns in a forthright, caring manner.** Gently but firmly encourage the person to seek trained professional help.

- **Be a model of healthy self-esteem and body image.** Recognize that others pay attention and learn from the way you talk about yourself and your body. Choose to talk about yourself with respect and appreciation. Choose to value yourself based on your goals, accomplishments, talents, and character. Refrain from letting the way you feel about your body weight and shape determine the course of your day. Embrace the natural diversity of human bodies and celebrate your body's unique shape and size.
- **Support local and national nonprofit eating disorders organizations** — like the National Eating Disorders Association — by volunteering your time or giving a tax-deductible donation.

Don't Weigh Your Self-Esteem. It's What's Inside That Counts!