

I think someone I know has an Eating Disorder

What Should I Say?

Navigating difficult conversations with someone you care about can be tricky.

There is no right or wrong way to talk to someone with an eating disorder and different approaches will work for different people.

It also may depend on your relationship with the person and where they are in their recovery journey.

The initial conversations with a person you think may have an eating disorder can be challenging. Remember, it can make a big difference to their recovery.

Helpful Tips

Be prepared. The most important thing you can do when approaching someone about an eating disorder is to be prepared and educate yourself first.

The person you care about may be experiencing high levels of anxiety, embarrassment or guilt, and may not recognise that they have a problem.

Be prepared for a range of responses and stay calm, regardless of the response.

Avoid broaching the topic if you are around food or in situations in which either of you are angry, tired or emotional.

Listen without judgement and think about what you will say.

Take into account that the person may fear revealing their behaviours or feelings.

Let them know that you care about them and want to support them through whatever comes next.

Try to use 'I' statements such as 'I care about you' or 'I'm worried about you'.

Make the person feel comfortable and let them know it is safe to talk to you.

Encourage the person to express how they feel. It is important to understand how they feel, rather than just state how you are feeling.



Give the person time to talk about their feelings and what is going on for them – do not rush them through the conversation.

Listen respectfully to what they have to say and let them know that you will not judge or criticise them.

Encourage them to seek help and explain that you will be there to support them.

You may need to be active in helping them find the right professionals and making the initial appointment.