

What to do when you think someone may have an eating disorder

SPEAK UP

Eating disorders often thrive in secret, so the most important thing you can do is talk to the person about what you're noticing. We suggest using "I" statements during this conversation, such as "I'm concerned because I haven't seen you have lunch like you usually do." It is common for individuals having problems with food or body image to minimize concerns that others bring to them, so be prepared to continue having the conversation. *(See the back for a quiz that you can use to guide the discussion.)*



THANK THEM FOR CONFIDING IN YOU AND OFFER SUPPORT

It's incredibly brave to take that first step and tell someone that you're struggling with disordered eating. Thank them for confiding in you and offer compassionate, non-judgmental support. Let them know you care about them, and you'll be available as a person to talk to or a shoulder to cry on. Ask what kind of support they need from you so they can get healthy.



ASK THEM TO GET TREATMENT

Eating disorders are real, complex illnesses that can cause serious harm. It is critical that you urge anyone who is struggling to reach out for treatment. Ask them to contact an eating disorder specialist like The Emily Program to schedule an eating disorder assessment. They can **call 1-888-EMILY-77** or **visit [emilyprogram.com](https://www.emilyprogram.com)** to start their recovery journey.



The Emily Program

The eating disorder specialists

Common signs of eating disorders

WATCH FOR THESE WARNING SIGNS

- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Frequently talking about food, weight or shape
- Rapid or persistent decline or increase in food intake
- Eating in secret, hiding food, or disrupting family meals
- Minimizing food and eating problems, despite concerns of others
- Purging; restricting; binge eating; compulsive eating; compulsive exercising; abuse of diet pills, laxatives, diuretics, or emetics

EATING DISORDER QUIZ

If you suspect someone is struggling with eating disorder behaviors, ask if it is okay to discuss their eating habits. For example, “I’m concerned about your eating. May we discuss how you typically eat and your relationship with food?”

Ask more questions. These 6 assessment questions can help assess the situation. (Adapted from the SCOFF Questionnaire by Morgan, Reid & Lacy.)

- Do you feel like you sometimes lose or have lost control over how you eat?
- Do you ever make yourself sick because you feel uncomfortably full?
- Do you believe yourself to be fat, even when others say you are too thin?
- Does food or thoughts about food dominate your life?
- Do thoughts about changing your body or weight dominate your life?
- Have others become worried about your weight and/or eating?

Two or more “yes” answers strongly indicate the presence of disordered eating. **Contact The Emily Program at 1-888-364-5977 or emilyprogram.com to schedule an assessment.**



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