

# Tips for Educators

## HOW TO HELP A STUDENT WITH AN EATING DISORDER



### 1 WHO APPROACHES THE STUDENT?

- Who does the student like?
- Who do they trust the most?

### 2 REFER TO RESOURCES

- Consult and involve guidance counselors and nurses if appropriate.
- Call MEDA 617-558-1881 for information, guidance and more resources.

### 3 EDUCATE YOURSELF

- Check your own biases.
- Know how diet culture influences you, and how you are influenced by diet culture.
- To learn more, go to:
  - [sizediversityandhealth.org](http://sizediversityandhealth.org)
  - [haescommunity.com](http://haescommunity.com)
  - [intuitiveeating.org](http://intuitiveeating.org)
  - [medainc.org](http://medainc.org)

### 4 WHEN TO TALK WITH THE STUDENT?

- Use your own judgement
  - Does the student acknowledge the issue?
- If they are losing their grip on reality or their life is in danger:
  - It is necessary to discuss this quickly.
  - Refer to resources if you need additional guidance.

### 5 DO YOU INVOLVE FAMILY?

- Consider family relationships, confidentiality, boundaries, and timing.
- It may be helpful to talk with the guidance department.
- Encourage the student to talk to their parents, and have a separate conversation with just parents when appropriate.

### KEEP IN MIND

- Some parents may recognize their child is showing signs of an eating disorder.
- Some parents may be in denial:
  - asserting that weight loss is 'healthy' or their child could never have this kind of problem.

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## WHEN TALKING TO A STUDENT



### BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

- Use a supportive, clear, non-judgmental tone.
- Be supportive and offer your assistance.
- Be careful when offering advice.
- Your aim is to gather support for the student in getting the care they need.

### ENTERING THE CONVERSATION

- Start the conversation slowly.
- Ask how they have been feeling lately, give them a chance to disclose the problem before you start sharing your concerns.

### EXAMPLE CONVERSATION STARTER

- "Tim, I've noticed lately that...(e.g. you seem pretty unhappy, you're not as outgoing as you used to be, your school work is getting more difficult for you, you've drastically changed your eating habits, etc.) and I'm really concerned about you. Have you noticed these things?"

### THE STUDENT'S RESPONSE

- Expect an unpredictable reaction.
- They may be "relieved," and welcome your care and concern.
- They may deny that anything is wrong, and push away your helping hand.
- They may insist that everything is "fine."
- They may resent the fact that you are "overreacting" or "interfering."
- Keep in mind that these responses are quite common as eating disorders are coping mechanisms.

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