

CARERS AND EATING DISORDERS



'PARENTS/CARERS SUFFER TOO'

Carers suffer too, even though you do not have an eating disorder, it is important that you have help and support. If the sufferer does not want help, don't let that stop you from seeking assistance, you have needs too.

Anyone with an eating disorder experiences tremendous pain and suffering, but they are not the only ones. Family and friends also experience their own pain. It is difficult to watch someone you love slowly destroy themselves, while you look on feeling helpless.

In order for someone to recover, they have to want to get better and be willing to accept help. No matter how much you want to help that person, you have to accept that you cannot force someone to get better or receive help.

HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL

You may find yourself feeling angry and guilty, both at yourself and the sufferer, with feelings like these.....

"Why did I not see this earlier" "This must be my fault" "Why can't I help" "Why can't they stop this themselves"

It is ok to have these feelings, they are perfectly natural. Parents certainly take on the guilt and feel responsible. Blaming yourself will not help.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Accepting there is a problem and coming alongside that person is the best way to move forward.

Many carers are afraid to approach the person with the eating disorder in case they make it worse. They feel the sufferer may do more harm to themselves or even die.

Trying to talk to someone you think has an eating disorder can be daunting, but you know that person well. Do not undervalue your own knowledge and instincts.

- * Try to be supportive and positive.
- * Be honest about your own feelings.
- * The sufferer may need specialist help, but you can offer invaluable help and support.
- * Listen to the person.
- * Assure the person that you are there for them; that they are not alone and that you want to help
- * Let them talk about how they really feel inside
- * Avoid talking about food, weight or their appearance
- * Try not to make meal-times a battle ground. Do not force the person to eat.
- * Recognise yours and the sufferers needs.
- * Try not to be confrontational or judgmental, but without compromise to yourself or family.
- * Be prepared that the sufferer may be upset or angry.
- * Encourage them to seek help.

Recovery is not easy and will take time. The eating disorder is only a symptom of underlying problems and they will need to talk about how they really feel inside.

Trying to help someone can be frustrating and hard work. Recovery can be a long process, you need to look after your own needs during this time. It is important that you are able to talk to someone about your feelings.

Recovery is possible. Setbacks will happen so be prepared. There will be times when anything you say or do will be wrong. Home may feel like a battleground. This can put great strain on family and friends. You must try to remember that whatever the sufferer says or does, it is out of pain and distress, and not personal, even if it may feel like it.

The greatest gift is to have someone to listen to me.

It is important that the sense of failure and guilt experienced by many parents is put into perspective otherwise these emotions will undermine the parents efforts to help their child.

It's important to show your feelings. It is OK to be angry. It is important for parents to show their emotions to their children, to be honest and not to pretend things are perfect.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

- * Visit your GP.
- * Visit websites which offer help: www.swedauk.org or www.b-eat.co.uk,
- * Join a local Support group (please call SWEDA to find out days and times)
- * Read up on leaflets / internet about information on how to help someone with an eating disorder.

SOMERSET & WESSEX EATING DISORDERS ASSOCIATION (SWEDA)

At SWEDA we recognise how difficult it is to be a carer of someone with an eating disorder, especially if they are not willing to accept help.

We can offer Carers non-judgmental support from trained listeners who know and understand what you are going through.

This can include:

- * Joining our self-help support group.
- * 1 to 1 counselling service.
- * Support and guidance sessions.
- * Access to information on our website Swedauk.org.
- * A range of leaflets about eating disorders.

If you would like to get in touch you can ring us, write, or email. If you do not feel ready to contact us directly, we have a website with all our details.



THE COACH HOUSE • HARVEST COURT • SHEPTON MALLET BA4 5BS • 01749 343344 • WWW.SWEDAUK.ORG