

10 EATING DISORDER INTERVENTION TIPS
To Help Families Reach Out to a Struggling Loved One



RosewoodRanch.com 800.845.2211



ROSEWOOD®
CENTERS FOR EATING DISORDERS

Dear Friends,

At Rosewood we understand family involvement is crucial to the healing and recovery process. At every level of care

clients participate in programs designed to address family systems and communication differences among family members.



As part of our commitment to family healing, Rosewood also offers “family week.” During family week Rosewood’s compassionate clinical and medical staff strive to create a safe, intimate environment that is conducive to honest, loving communication. Within this nurturing environment, residents, families, and loved ones are introduced to the tools they need to return home with renewed clarity and confidence to live healthy, productive lives.

This guide hopes to provide practical advice on how to gently reach out to family members who are struggling with an eating disorder. The guidelines provided are a general sample of the skills and values one may be exposed to during Rosewood’s family week.

Please feel free to copy, print, or electronically distribute these handouts as you see fit, including bulletin boards, emails, discussion forums, at meetings, or in the class room.

GET THE ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS GUIDE AT
RosewoodTempe.com/Working-With-Family/

10 TIPS TO HELP FAMILIES

1. MAKE A PLAN

Make a plan to approach the person in a private place when there is no immediate stress and time to talk.

2. PRESENT YOUR CONCERNS

Present in a caring but straightforward way what you have observed and what your concerns are. Tell him/her that you are worried and want to help. (Friends who are too angry with the person to talk supportively should not be part of this discussion.)

3. LISTEN

Give the person time to talk and encourage them to verbalize their feelings. Ask clarifying questions. Listen carefully; accept what is said in a non-judgmental manner.

4. DON'T ARGUE

Do not argue about whether there is or is not a problem; power struggles are not going to be helpful. Perhaps you can say, "I hear what you are saying and hope you are right that this is not a problem, but I am still very worried about what I have seen and heard, and that is not going to go away."

5. PROVIDE TREATMENT INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Provide information about resources for treatment. Offer to go with the person and wait while they have their first appointment with a counselor, physician, or nutritionist. Ask them to consider going for one appointment before they make a decision about ongoing treatment.

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10 TIPS TO HELP FAMILIES

6. SEEK MEDICAL HELP IF NEEDED

If you are concerned that the eating disorder is severe or life threatening, enlist the help of a medical professional, a counseling center staff member, or a relative, friend, or roommate of the person before you intervene. Present a united and supportive front with others.



7. BE PERSISTENT, YET CALM

If the person denies the problem, becomes angry, or refuses treatment, understand that this is often part of the illness. Besides, they have a right to refuse treatment (unless their life is in danger). You may feel helpless, angry, and frustrated with them. You might say, "I know you can refuse to go for help, but that will not stop me from worrying about you or caring about you. I may bring this up again with you later and maybe we can talk more about it then." Follow through on this and on any other promise you make.



8. PLANT A SEED AND HAVE FAITH

Do not try to be a hero or a rescuer; you will probably be resented. If you do the best you can to help on several occasions and the person does not accept it, stop. Remind yourself you have done all that is reasonable to do. Eating disorders are stubborn problems and treatment is most effective when the person is ready for it. You may have planted a seed that helps them get ready.



9. LEARN ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders are usually not emergency situations. But if the person is suicidal or otherwise in serious danger, GET PROFESSIONAL HELP IMMEDIATELY!

10. READ GUIDELINES FOR FAMILIES

Feeling helpless in the face of an eating disorder? Download "20 Guidelines For Families: What to do and not do when reaching out to a struggling loved one." Feel free to share this helpful flyer.

MEET THE WRITER

BILLIE CHURCH, MC, LPC

Family Therapist

As the family therapist, Billie facilitates the Family Week Program for the adult and adolescent patients of Rosewood. Billie is responsible for implementing the intensive five day family program, which includes educational lectures as well as intensive communication exercises. Billie believes that family involvement is key to the healing and recovery process for our patients. Billie joined Rosewood with over nineteen years experience working with individuals, families, children/adolescents, and adults.



"Rosewood's Family Week Program not only touches the patients and family members but also touches me personally. I am fortunate in this position as family therapist to witness and take part in growth, forgiveness, and the recovery journey every week."

~Billie Church, MC, LPC, Family Therapist

“*My parents looked all over the country but chose Rosewood. This place saved my life. I learned coping skills. At family week my dad was more accepting of my disorder. He used to tell me to "just eat" or "cut this crap out." But now, he supports me. I'm so thankful for Rosewood. I know I'm not "fixed." This will be a lifelong struggle but I seek support and I push through. Recovery isn't easy. It's the hardest thing I've ever had to do. But it's so worth it. - Rosewood Alumni*

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