

My Sibling has an Eating Disorder



An activity journal,
for children and
young teenagers

Name _____

What is an eating disorder

Everyone has certain foods they don't like and also certain foods that they really like. Most people manage to eat a healthy mix of foods on a daily basis and that includes some treats like chocolate and ice cream .

People with eating disorders find it difficult to get that balance right and so they might end up eating too much or too little.

An eating disorder is an illness that affects the body and the mind and both need treating. Your brother or sister, known as a sibling will get help from special doctors who will guide them to eat the right amount of food, and also to talk about how they are feeling. Your sibling might be feeling very sad, or angry, or frustrated or anxious, and sometimes this can make them be cross with the people around them, including you.

Anyone can get an eating disorder, and it is nobody's fault that your sibling has an eating disorder. Remember it is just an illness and people with eating disorders get better once they get the right help. An eating disorder is a way of coping with emotions. Part of treatment is helping the patient to develop more healthy coping strategies.

You can help your sibling by acting normally around them. Remind your sibling of all the fun things that you can do together. Even if your sibling has to rest or stay in bed you can still watch a movie, play games, do colouring together

Types of eating disorder

There are many different types of eating disorder and they have scientific sounding names. Your sibling might struggle with more than one type, that is quite common. Here are some descriptions written by children with eating disorders

Anorexia Nervosa—I try to avoid eating when ever I can. I feel fat even though everyone tells me I am not fat. I do get hungry but I am more scared of getting fat. Sometimes I over exercise. All this can make me feel really tired and sad and angry.

Bulimia Nervosa—I am also scared of being fat and so I might avoid food all day. But then I lose control and I eat way too much too quickly. Then I need to be sick (this is called purging) or over exercise or starve the next day. I feel really ashamed a lot of the time, and also tired and sad and angry.

Binge Eating Disorder—When I am feeling sad or upset I eat way too much and I cannot control it. Most people eat comfort food sometimes. For me it is my main way of coping. I feel very ashamed and I hate the way people look at me and judge me. They think I am fat and lazy.

You might hear of other eating disorders such as Emotional Overeating, Selective Eating, Orthorexia, Functional Dysphagia. They are all medical conditions that need expert help. People don't choose to have these illnesses.

What to say to friends

People say a lot of things about eating disorders which are not correct. We call these myths. Here are some of these with the facts. You might want to use these to explain the true facts to your friends.

Myth 1: Only teenage girls get eating disorders

Fact : Anyone can get an eating disorder at any age and regardless of gender or background

Myth 2: All people with eating disorders are very thin

Fact: Some people do get very thin, especially if they have anorexia. Lots of people with eating disorders look a normal weight

Myth 3: Eating disorders are caused by the media or bullying, or problems in the family

Fact: Nobody knows exactly what causes eating disorders. It can be biological or chemical or psychological. Often it is just bad luck

Myth 4: Eating disorders are a choice and you can choose to stop

Fact: Nobody chooses to have an eating disorder. They are complex medical illnesses and people need lots of help and support to get better

Myth 5: Nobody ever recovers from an eating disorder

Fact: Eating disorders are treatable and most young people recover once they get the right help and support.

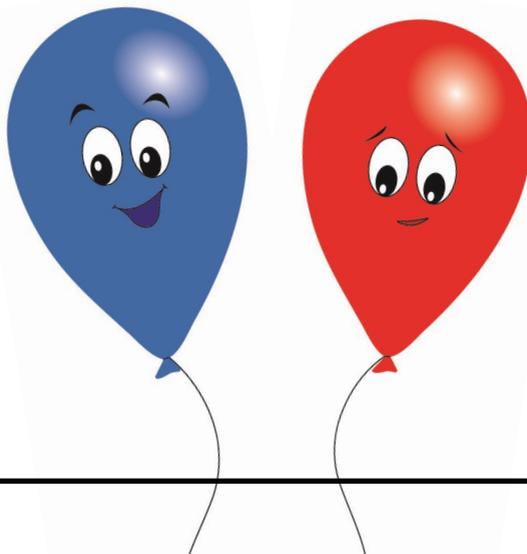
It can help to give the eating disorder a name

Some families like to give the eating disorder a name. (the doctors call this externalising the illness). Imagine your sibling has a blue balloon and a red balloon in his mind. The blue side is happy and healthy. The red side is unhappy, anxious and struggles to eat the right food. The eating disorder makes the red side get bigger and bigger and the blue side get smaller. One family had a son called Eddie who had an eating disorder called Anorexia. This family called the eating disorder Bad Wizard.

When Bad Wizard made Eddie cross or do nasty things, his family would say

“Eddie we really love you and we always will love you. Bad Wizard just made you do something that is not acceptable in this house. Eddie we will help you to take control of Bad Wizard so these things don’t happen so often. Eddie we love you and will help you.”

Eddie felt really supported when his family did this. It helped his blue balloon to get bigger again.



Compliments

Giving your sibling compliments can really help to inflate his blue balloon again

“You are really good at art”

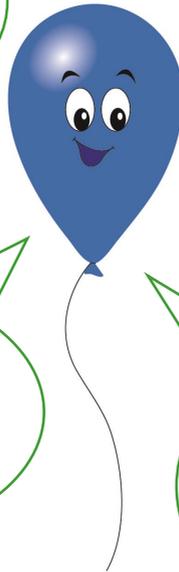
“You helped me learn my spellings”

“You are good at thinking up new games”

“You make me laugh a lot”

“You are kind to me when I am feeling nervous”

“You are so patient with your 3 year old sister”



Giving compliments might make your sibling feel happier and more confident. Your sibling might even start to give you some compliments back.

Boosting self esteem

Write down or draw something you like about your sibling and something you think your sibling might say they like about you.

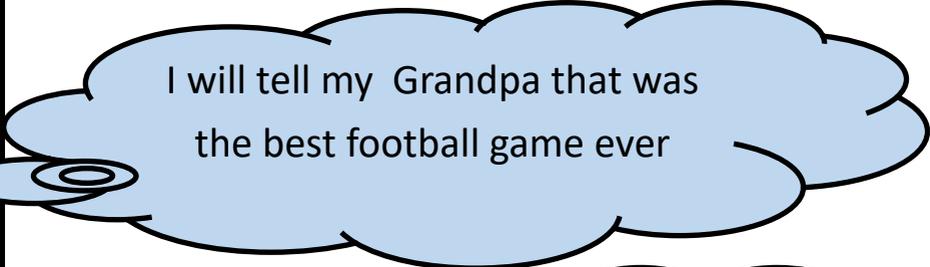


A large rectangular box for drawing or writing, containing a small illustration of a yellow pencil in the top-left corner.

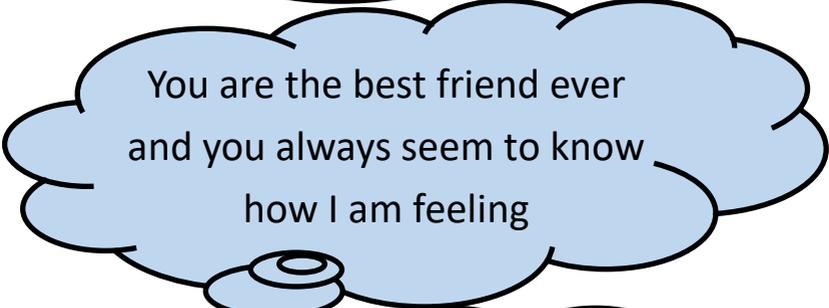
Here are some more ideas of nice things people say about each other:



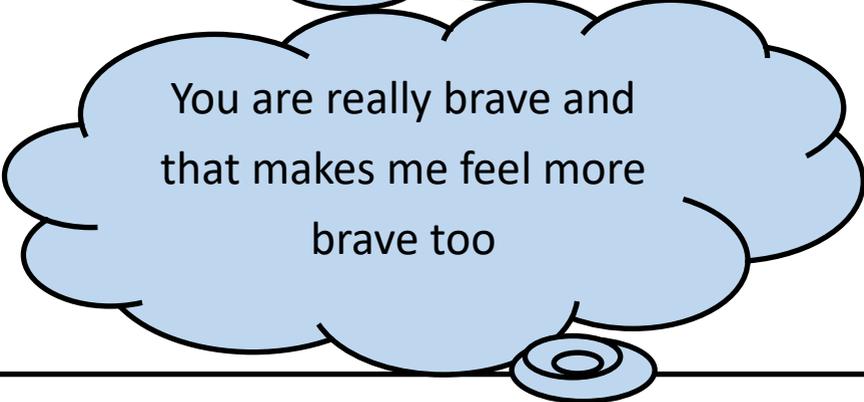
I will tell my Mum how much I love her



I will tell my Grandpa that was the best football game ever



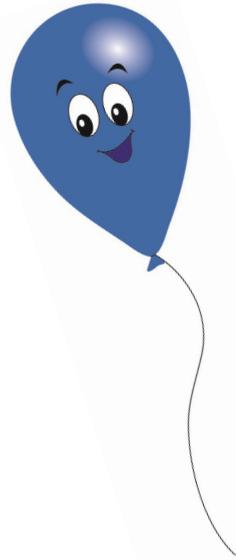
You are the best friend ever and you always seem to know how I am feeling



You are really brave and that makes me feel more brave too

Fun activities can help to inflate your sibling's blue balloon and yours too

Write down or draw things you like doing with your sibling



Sometimes you might want to do things on your own. Can you think of things that might help if you are feeling sad, or angry or anxious.

Sometimes you might want to do things with your Mum or Dad or other family members. Don't be worried about asking for some time with them away from your sibling with the eating disorder.

My support network

Your sibling with an eating disorder will have lots of people to talk to about their illness.

If you are having a bad day or something is worrying you, you might want to talk to someone.

What would a good person to talk to be like? i.e. friendly, funny, good at listening

Who would I include in my support network and why?

- Someone from home (you might want to include someone other than your Mum and Dad, in case they are busy looking after your sibling)

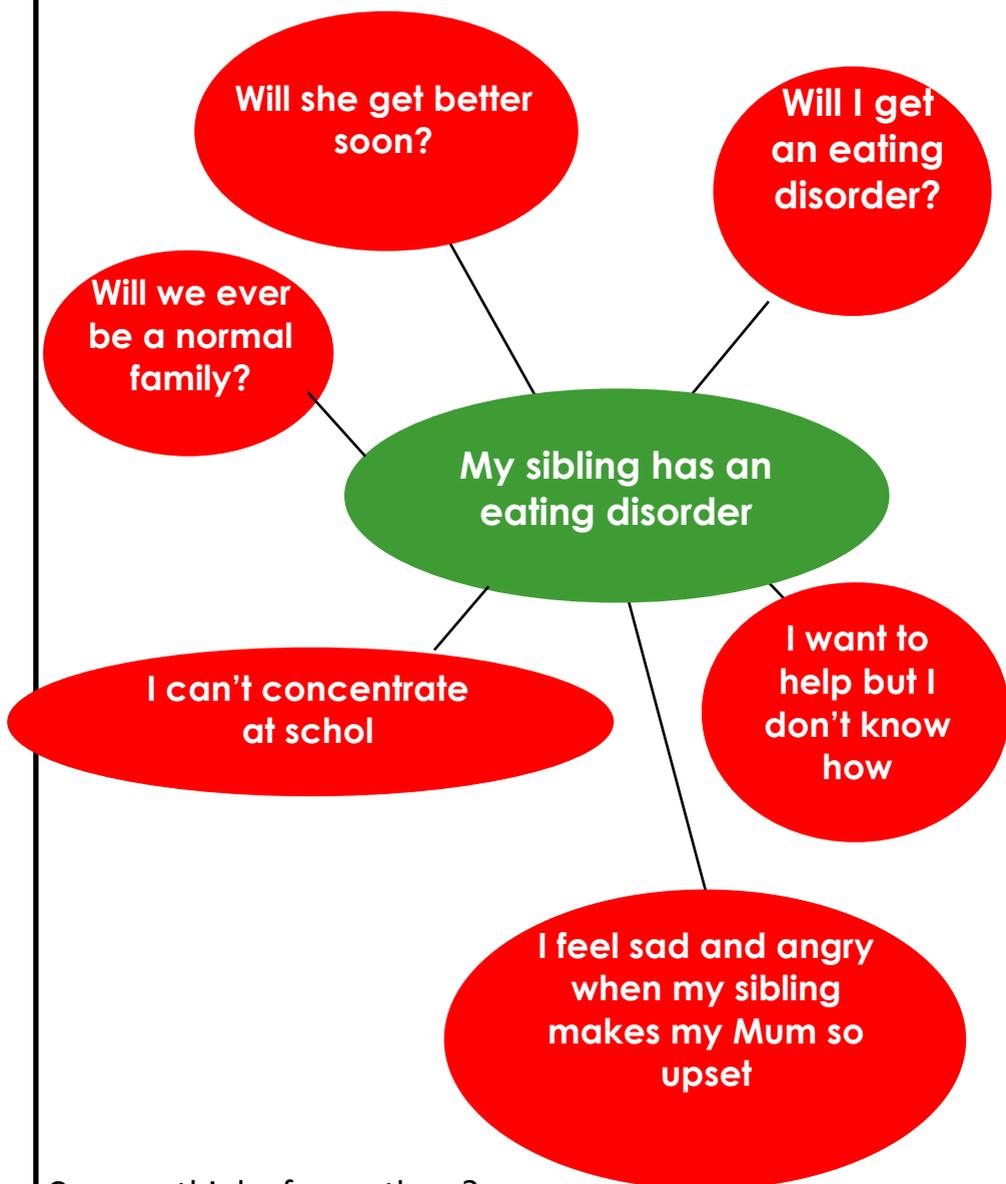
- Someone at school (perhaps a friend and a trusted adult)

- Someone else (from your community or a website like Childline)

Remember that the person you talk to won't always be able to keep it a secret. They will want to make sure you get the support you need. You can talk to them about who needs to know what, but try to remember it's a good thing that people understand what's going on so they can help you, though it might seem a bit scary at first.

Worries can make your red balloon get bigger

Things that you might worry about:



Can you think of any others?

Five step plan

A **five step plan** for addressing things that are on your mind and worrying you:

1. Identify what is worrying you

2. Talk to somebody from your support network

3. Work out some possible ways of coping with that person

4. Try some of the possible ways of coping

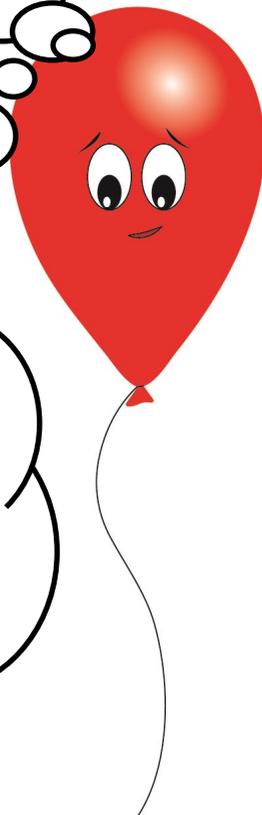
5. Review and reflect—talk to your support person about how it went?

If something doesn't work you can always try something else.

What did you learn from trying something out?

Remember if you keep your worries to yourself they will become more difficult to manage. Then you might start to believe all your worries will come true.

If you find your worries are becoming so big that they are always on your mind, you might want to ask your family if you can talk to a counsellor who is specially trained to help young people who have a sibling with an eating disorder



Top Tips from other Siblings

My sibling is one of my best friends and still likes to do normal things with me.

I have discovered that my sibling doesn't want to talk about food, it is better to talk about other things, especially at meal times.

My parents are doing everything they can to help my sibling and this includes finding the right doctors.

Sometimes my parents have to spend a lot of time with my sibling because he is ill.

Sometimes my sibling asks me to keep secrets. I have to tell him I cannot do this because he is ill.

Sometimes my sibling doesn't want to be with me or play with me. He gets exhausted because of his eating disorder

My parents can still spend time with me and it is helpful if I tell them what I would most like to do.

My parents have told me ways I can help, and they have also told me I don't have to help if I don't feel like it.

It is ok for me to feel sad and angry and anxious. I have found that it really helps if I talk to my Grandpa when I am feeling like this.

My sibling will get better because he has a really supportive family and great doctors.

Write down anything else you can think of:

Difficult Situations - How to Respond

Sometimes your sibling might scream, shout, swear, mess things up or break things. Your parents are responsible to keep everyone safe and each family will develop strategies to cope with these situations. You might feel awkward and not know how to respond.

It is a good idea to:

A) wait until things have calmed down

B) Ask your sibling if he wants to do something—watch TV, draw, play outside

C) Then you have a choice—you can ignore what happened and it is ok for you to do that OR

D) You might want to talk about what happened. This is a suggestion that can be really helpful and it shows your sibling that you really care about him, and you want to help him get better.

i) What did you see and how did it make you feel eg “ When you threw the plate at the wall and you were screaming and shouting I felt really scared”

li) Guess how he might have been feeling eg “You seemed really angry and frightened at the same time”

lii) Guess why he might have been feeling like that eg: “ I am guessing that Bad Wizard was really screaming in your ear- all that stuff about being a fat disgusting pig and a useless failure. I would be terrified and furious if I had Bad Wizard to deal with”

lv) Soothe - this might be a hug or a distraction or a compliment or all three eg “you are so brave fighting Bad Wizard like you do. I know you will win this battle. I am here for you. Let’s go and watch TV and forget about him for the rest of the day.”

Useful Phrases—Ideas from Siblings

I love you, you will always be my big sister/ younger brother etc

Your eating disorder (Bad Wizard) makes me mad sometimes, but that's ok. I know you will get better

I can see you are really upset and I am going to give you a big hug

I can see you are really angry and so I am going to give you some space and come back later

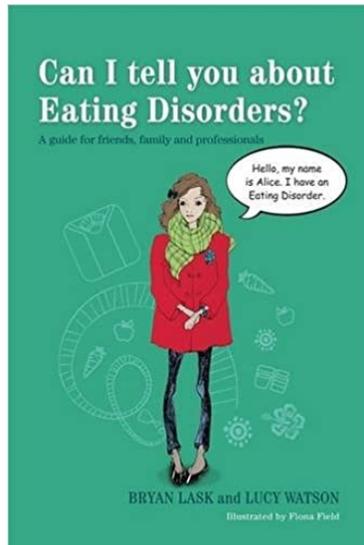
I am really looking forward to doing all those things we used to enjoy

I can see you are really struggling with Bad Wizard today

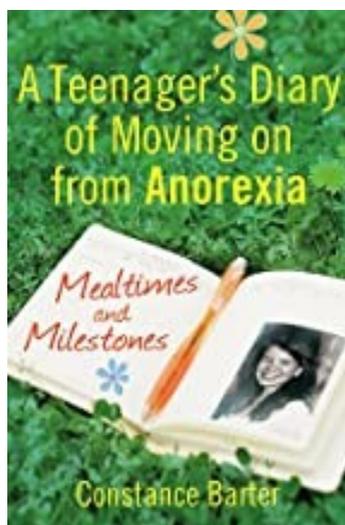
How is Bad Wizard today?

Write some of your own useful phrases

This book is for children and has lots of ideas on how to help support someone with an eating disorder. You might want to read it with a grown up:



This book is for teenagers. It tells the story of how a teenager recovered from her eating disorder:



There is lots of information on line and you can ask for support from these charities:



www.childline.org



www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk



www.anorexiabulimiacarer.org.uk