

EATING DISORDER AWARENESS WEEK 2020

BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES TO RECEIVING EATING DISORDER SUPPORT

Seeking help for any mental illness, let alone an eating disorder, is no easy task. Preparing yourself for the challenges you may experience can help you advocate for the support you need. You deserve help and do not have to wait until you meet criteria for a clinical diagnosis to receive help.

STIGMA AND SHAME

“People won’t take me seriously because I don’t *look* like I have an eating disorder.”

The belief that only certain people are affected by eating disorders is a widespread misconception. Eating disorders do not discriminate; they affect people of all genders, ages, sizes, classes, sexualities, abilities, races, and ethnic backgrounds. No matter how you look, your struggle with food, weight, and body image is valid.

“I’m embarrassed to admit I have an eating disorder.”

Similar to other medical and mental illnesses, eating disorders are *not* personal choices. They are complex illnesses that arise from a combination of biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors.

“I’m worried what my family and friends will think/do when they find out I have an eating disorder.”

Although well-intentioned, loved ones may not always respond supportively at first. Encourage your loved ones to learn more about eating disorders by reading books, articles, and brochures. The [EDAW partner organizations](#) are an excellent place to start.

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS HELP-SEEKING

“Nobody will be able to help me.”

Although it may seem very lonely at times, there are individuals and organizations dedicated to supporting people affected by eating disorders and related concerns such as depression, anxiety, substance use, and trauma. The [NEDIC service provider directory](#) can help you get started in finding the right support.

“I don’t need help—I can handle problems by myself.”

It takes incredible strength and courage to ask for help and support. By accessing support for eating disorder symptoms, you can help prevent them from negatively affecting your well-being.

PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS (E.G., TIME, FINANCIAL, LOCATION)

“I’m concerned how taking time off for appointments might affect my school or work.”

Making the time to treat your eating disorder appropriately takes a lot of strength. By taking time off to attend to your health, you can perform better in school and work.

“My local community lacks resources and it’s difficult for me to travel to appointments.”

Several eating disorder professionals and organizations offer online services. Depending on the format you prefer, the [Looking Glass Foundation](#), [Eating Disorder Support Network of Alberta](#), [Body Brave](#), and [Eating Disorders Nova Scotia](#) are excellent resources regardless of where you live!

“I don’t have anyone who can help me find support.”

It takes a lot of bravery to ask for help. A great resource that can help you during this process is [NEDIC’s toll-free helpline \(1-866-NEDIC-20\)](#). When you call, a trained support worker can provide you with options and figure out next steps. You have allies who want to help you get better.