

BODY IMAGE DISTRESS TIPS FOR FAMILIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EATING DISORDERS



VALIDATE NOT REASSURE

Reassurance that your young person is beautiful/attractive rarely works. It is better to not rationalize with the body image distress thoughts, rather empathise with how hard the distress is.



STAY ON THE SHORE

Equip yourself with skills to help yourself stay calm in the face of your child's distress while they ride the anxiety wave. It is likely that the 'feeling' part of the brain has taken over and the 'rational' part of the brain has gone offline.



DISTRACT, TOLERATE & SOOTHE

Help your child to manage their distress through distraction, distress tolerance skills, using the senses, and helping to problem solve the dilemmas which arise when body image distress is high.



REFEEDING & GAINING WEIGHT IS CRITICAL

Malnutrition impacts the brain and makes body distortion/fear of weight gain worse. Weight gain and improved nutrition helps to restore cognitive functioning and may reduce the distress about body shape and size.



USE BODY POSITIVE TALK

Reflecting on our own use of body negative talk and overvaluation of shape and size is important. Changing our own language and thoughts can model body image acceptance and a focus on health in recovery.



MINIMISE TRIGGERS

When body image distress is very severe and interfering with refeeding and recovery, it can be useful to modify the environment or social situations to minimise triggers e.g. cover mirrors, buy clothing online.



MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

As parents, you have the right to restrict the online content your young person has access to. If their social media access is interfering with your child's recovery, restrict it or teach your child about media literacy.