



CEED

THE VICTORIAN
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
IN EATING DISORDERS

Carer Resource Guide

Caring for an Adult with an Eating Disorder



Caring for an Adult with an Eating Disorder

- Caring for an Adult with an eating disorder can feel like a daunting and confusing experience. As a support person, you may be completely new to the world of eating disorders or perhaps you've been supporting your loved one for a longer period of time. Perhaps the person you are supporting welcomes your assistance or maybe they are reluctant to accept your help right now. In any of these scenarios, it can be challenging to understand how best to assist your loved one and what your role can be as a support person.
- Supports can be key advocates in assisting their loved one to engage in treatment, remain in treatment and support recovery behaviours. We recognise that it is very difficult to recover without support and thank you for persisting in helping your loved one. We hope to answer some of your most common questions here:

What is my role in supporting my loved one?

- **Learn as much as you can about eating disorders**
 - Having a good understanding of eating disorders will help you to be better able to support your loved one
- **Remember who the person is outside of their eating disorder**
 - The person you care for and support is not their illness even though it may affect their sense of identity. Remember that they are still the same person they have always been. Separating the person from the illness can be helpful for you and the person you are caring for.
- **Communicate openly and without judgement**
 - Avoid focusing on food and weight and instead try to talk about the feelings that may exist beneath the illness
- **Remain positive**
 - Draw attention to the person's positive attributes. Talk about the things they enjoy and are good at and the things you love about them. Reminding the person of their life outside of their illness can help them to realise there is more to them than their eating disorder.
- **Make time for yourself**
 - Prioritising 'time out' for yourself will help restore your energy and rejuvenate your mind. Make the time to see a friend, go for a walk, do some exercise or watch a movie. The better you care for yourself, the more you will be able to help the person you are caring for.

- **Be patient – progress/recovery is rarely linear**
 - People living with eating disorders can experience a range of different and conflicting emotions all in one day. This can be very hard for you and the person you are caring for or supporting to manage. The road to recovery is filled with emotions and setbacks and can be a long journey. It is important to be as calm and patient as possible throughout their recovery and remember that there is no quick fix. Recovery takes time and patience.
- **Seek support for yourself**
 - Seeking professional support from a medical or mental health professional can reduce the amount of stress you carry and improve your capacity to care for someone living with an eating disorder. Eating disorder organisations and support groups can help you through challenges by providing guidance, strategies and resources, and connect you with others going through similar experiences.
- **Be respectful of confidentiality and boundaries**

Where can I go to learn more about eating disorders?

The following Australian organisations offer comprehensive information about eating disorders:

- Eating Disorders Victoria: Eating Disorders A-Z
 - <https://www.eatingdisorders.org.au/eating-disorders-a-z/>
- National Eating Disorders Collaboration: Eating Disorders Explained
 - <https://nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/eating-disorders-explained>
- Centre for Clinical Interventions: Information Sheets – Disordered Eating
 - <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Others>

What organisations can help with building up my support skills?

- InsideOut Institute offer the SupportED: Online Self-Help Program for Carers of People with an Eating Disorder. This is a free online training and skills-building program for carers.
 - <https://insideoutinstitute.org.au/resource-library/supported>
- F.E.A.S.T. have a range of education options for carers including:
 - F.E.A.S.T 30 Days (an innovative and unique program designed to educate and empower parents and caregivers of people with eating disorders).
 - <https://www.feast-ed.org/feast-30-days/>

- Caregiver Skills Toolkit (practical guidance and critical skills through a series of short, informative videos.
 - <https://www.feast-ed.org/caregiver-skills-toolkit-program/>
- Eating Disorders Queensland offer 'The Shared Table', an innovative online meal support training program for carers (an option is available for carers not doing FBT):
 - <https://edqsharedtable.com.au/>

Where can I access financial support?

- Tandem is the peak body that represents family and friends supporting people living with mental illness. Tandem administer the Mental Health Carer Support Fund, which is funded by the Victorian Government. The Mental Health Carer Support Fund provides funding to assist people in their support role, to promote and sustain the relationship, and improve the wellbeing of families and members of the community performing this role.
 - <https://www.tandemcarers.org.au/>
- Carer Gateway is an Australian Government program providing free services and support for carers. You may be eligible to access a tailored support package.
 - <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/tailored-support-packages>
- The Support for Carers Program provides respite, other services and supports for all Victorian carers, responding to a carer's short-term, high level support needs.
 - <https://www.carersvictoria.org.au/benefits/support-for-carers-program>
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect is a service dedicated to those who are supporting people living with mental health and substance use challenges or psychological distress. They may be able to assist with access to funds to help with immediate practical needs.
 - <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-connect#about-mental-health-and-wellbeing-connect>
- The Queen's Fund provides financial assistance to single Victorian women and their children who are in crisis, distress or emergency situations.
 - <https://www.queensfund.org.au/>

How do I find a treatment provider in my area?

- Eating Disorders Victoria offer free sessions with the Telehealth Nurse where you can discuss treatment pathways and source treatment providers in your area. You can book sessions online via this link:
 - <https://www.eatingdisorders.org.au/find-support/telehealth-nurse/>
- ANZAED (Australia and New Zealand Academy for Eating Disorders) have a credentialling system for clinicians treating people with eating disorders, to reflect a level of expertise and training. You can search for a credentialled eating disorder clinician (including psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, mental health nurses, nurse practitioners, psychiatrists and GPs) via the search tool online:
 - <https://connected.anzaed.org.au/Connected/Find-Eating-Disorder-Help/Find-Eating-Disorder-Help-Location.aspx>

I'm worried about the safety of my loved one and need to talk to someone

Emergency 000: **000**

- Emergency, Police and Ambulance (24 hours)
- If someone has tried to harm themselves or someone else, or you think they are about to, call triple zero (000) immediately or go with them to an emergency department.

Lifeline: **13 11 14**

- Crisis Support. Suicide Prevention
- Connect with a Lifeline Crisis Supporter (24 hours)

Beyond Blue: **1300 224 636**

- Beyond Blue Support Service is available 24/7 for brief counselling

Suicide Call back Service: **1300 659 467**

- Suicide Callback Service (24 hours)

13 YARN: **13 92 76**

- 13 Yarn is the first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping.
- 13 Yarn offer a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis supporter who can provide crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

CATT Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team

- A CATT is a group of people who work together and includes mental health professionals such as psychiatric nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, and psychologists. They are based in major hospitals.
- A CATT responds to urgent requests to help people in mental health crisis 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A mental health crisis can include: a psychotic episode, self-harm, feeling suicidal and feeling out of control.
- To find your local CATT team, ring your closest major public hospital.

Where can I access free counselling support for myself or my loved one?

- Eating Disorders Victoria offer a free Telehealth phone and web-based counselling service, available to Victorians experiencing eating disorders, their carers and support people. You can access up to five sessions of free counselling support.
 - <https://www.eatingdisorders.org.au/find-support/eating-disorder-wellbeing-support-program/>
- Carer Gateway offer free counselling to carers, either in person one-on-one counselling, in-person group counselling, or phone counselling.
 - <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/about/person-phone-counselling>
- Eating Disorders Families Australia offer a free counselling service for eating disorder carers and families who are 18 or over. Sessions are free for carers, with no cap on session numbers, no referrals required and no waitlist.
 - <https://edfa.org.au/counselling-service/>

What is a Collaborative Care Skills Workshop and why should I enrol?

- Collaborative Carer Skills Workshop (CCSW) is an internationally recognised evidence-based workshop offering parents, carers and support people a range of practical skills and communication techniques to more effectively care for their loved one with an eating disorder.
- CCSW is supported by a growing body of research. Studies have shown the program to be effective in reducing psychological distress, caregiver burden and emotional over-involvement.
- CCSW also incorporates other evidence-based concepts - motivational interviewing techniques, helping carers to build rapport, explore ambivalence and support positive change; and principles of CBT, assisting caregivers to understand the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with eating disorders.

Eating Disorders Books for Adults

Eight Keys to Recovery from an Eating Disorder: Effective Strategies from Therapeutic Practice and Personal Experience

- By Carolyn Costin and Gwen Schubert Grabb
- The authors bravely share their unique stories of suffering from and eventually overcoming their own severe eating disorders. Interweaving personal narrative with the perspective of their own therapist-client relationship, their insights bring an unparalleled depth of awareness into just what it takes to successfully beat this challenging and seemingly intractable clinical issue.

Sick Enough: A Guide to the Medical Complications of Eating Disorders

- By Jennifer Gaudiani
- Patients with eating disorders frequently feel that they aren't "sick enough" to merit treatment, despite medical problems that are both measurable and unmeasurable. They may struggle to accept rest, nutrition, and a team to help them move towards recovery. Sick Enough offers patients, their families, and clinicians a comprehensive, accessible review of the medical issues that arise from eating disorders by bringing relatable case presentations and a scientifically sound, engaging style to the topic.

Rehabilitate, Rewire, Recover!: Anorexia recovery for the determined Adult

- By Tabitha Farrar
- *Rehabilitate, Rewire, Recover!* focuses on: Nutritional rehabilitation to heal the body, Neural rewiring to shift neural pathways of restriction, exercise compulsions, and anorexia-generated thoughts and behaviours in the brain. Using experience from her own recovery, and accounts from adults whom she has worked with as a recovery coach, Tabitha Farrar takes you through the process of building your own, personalised, recovery.

Skills-based Caring for a Loved One with an Eating Disorder: The New Maudsley Method

- By Janet Treasure, Grainne Smith, Anna Crane
- *Skills-based Caring* equips carers with the skills and knowledge needed to support those suffering from an eating disorder, and to help them to break free from the traps that prevent recovery. Through a coordinated approach, it offers detailed techniques and strategies, which aim to improve professionals' and carers' ability to build continuity of support for their loved ones.

Decoding Anorexia: How Breakthroughs in Science Offer Hope for Eating Disorders

- By Carrie Arnold
- Decoding Anorexia is the first and only book to explain anorexia nervosa from a biological point of view. Its clear, user-friendly descriptions of the genetics and neuroscience behind the disorder is paired with first person descriptions and personal narratives of what biological differences mean to sufferers. Author Carrie Arnold, a trained scientist, science writer, and past sufferer of anorexia, speaks with clinicians, researchers, parents, other family members, and sufferers about the factors that make one vulnerable to anorexia, the neurochemistry behind the call of starvation, and why it's so hard to leave anorexia behind.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022

Families and Carers

- The Mental Health and Wellbeing Act (the Act) recognises the important role played by families, carers and supporters of people experiencing mental illness and psychological distress.
- The Act supports the involvement of carers and of parents of children and young people in the assessment, treatment, care, support, and recovery of people receiving mental health and wellbeing services.
- The Act includes mechanisms for a person to appoint a nominated support person to support them to express their views and preferences if they become unwell and receive compulsory assessment or treatment.
- The Act also sets out the circumstances when a person's health or personal information may be disclosed to family members or carers.
- You can access the full Act here: <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-2022/001>

Complaint Procedures

- Anyone can make a complaint about mental health and wellbeing services, including families, carers, and supporters.
- Complaints can be made directly to a mental health and wellbeing service provider. All mental health and wellbeing service providers must have procedures for receiving, managing, and resolving complaints.
- Complaints can also be made to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission.
- Complaints can be made to the Commission in relation to any matter arising from:
 - the provision of mental health and wellbeing services by a mental health and wellbeing service provider.
 - a failure by a mental health and wellbeing service provider to provide services to a consumer
 - a failure by a mental health and wellbeing service provider to make all reasonable efforts to comply with the principles of the Act.
 - the way in which a complaint was handled by a mental health and wellbeing service provider.
- Complaints can also be made by a carer, family member or supporter in relation to their experience in that role. <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/chief-psychiatrist/reporting-a-failure-to-comply-with-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-2022>
- If further guidance is required, the Office of Chief Psychiatrist can be contacted by phone on 1300 767 299.