



F.E.A.S.T. Coffee Breaks

F.E.A.S.T. COFFEE BREAKS INITIATIVE

Families Empowered and Supporting Treatment of Eating Disorders believes parents have unique abilities to support one another.

F.E.A.S.T. Coffee Breaks is an initiative to help our members to connect with other local caregivers. Breaks can be anything from two moms arranging to meet at a coffee shop or an informal regular gathering for a group of families in a restaurant or someone's home.

The goal is simple: to help isolated parents feel connected and empowered.

There is a special isolation to caregiving a loved one with an eating disorder, but also special concerns about privacy. For that reason we recommend using the [ATDT "Connect with Local Members" Forum](#) to allow parents to reveal their general location and arrange for meetings through the forum messaging system. We suggest that parents create "gmail" accounts to use on their ATDT profile if they wish to avoid sharing personal details.

TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STARTING A LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP:

STEP ONE: Connect with local members.

- On www.aroundthedinnertable.org, ad/or
- By creating a flyer to distribute in your community. We recommend using a gmail account created just for the group. (As these are independent, parent run groups, we ask that any flyers do not use F.E.A.S.T. logos, but rather list www.feast-ed.org in a list of resources.)
- We do not suggest publicly advertising meeting locations on the internet, so once a connection is made on the forum we ask that you use private email to discuss the specific meeting site.

STEP TWO: Plan your meeting

- Set a date, start time, end time and location.
- Print out F.E.A.S.T. web page content and printable [resources](#) to use at your meetings. We are also happy to send you a small supply of F.E.A.S.T. brochures and Family Guide Booklets to get you started. Contact us at info@feast-ed.org.
- Establish meeting Rules and Etiquette. Remember that F.E.A.S.T. cannot control or monitor what happens when local members meet, so we suggest that all participants be aware of and agree to follow certain suggested ground rules listed below.

STEP THREE: Regular Meetings

- If your group begins to meet regularly, consider creating a flyer or brochure to distribute locally. F.E.A.S.T. can also list your group's meeting time and place on a members-only forum or website page if you like. (Again, as these are independent, parent run groups, we ask that any flyers do not use F.E.A.S.T. logos, but rather list www.feast-ed.org in a list of resources.)
- Contact us at info@feast-ed.org for additional information or guidance, particularly if the group becomes interested in doing advocacy work.

RULES:

- *The goals of any meeting between F.E.A.S.T. members are meant to be: connection, kindness, and information.*
- *Beyond F.E.A.S.T.'s Founding Principles, nothing said by participants should be considered endorsed or offered by F.E.A.S.T.*
- *The privacy of other members is profoundly important: names and contact information should never go beyond the people who are meeting.*
- *Details of the family, patient, and treatment history must never go beyond the get-together itself.*
- *Coffee meetings are between peers - fellow caregivers - and not to be used as treatment advice or therapy.*
- *These informal meetings are not a replacement for any aspect of treatment. Families must always be referred to professional, evidence-based care and information.*
- *F.E.A.S.T. Coffee Breaks are meant for adult caregivers only. Due to the boundaries expected of caregivers, patients are not to be invited or allowed to participate. Support for patients must come from caregivers and family, period. Any meeting joined by a patient should be promptly ended and the patient politely asked to refer loved ones to the F.E.A.S.T. site. This is for the protection of patients and not meant as a rejection or lack of caring.*
- *Parents who are also currently suffering from an eating disorder are considered patients.*
- *There are no dues involved, nor is a donation to F.E.A.S.T. required (yet **always** welcome).*
- *If there are concerns for the safety or stability of any participants or their family members, please suspend meetings and contact F.E.A.S.T.. If a meeting feels uncomfortable please let F.E.A.S.T. know and feel free to stop communicating with the other participants. If a participant seems to be at risk of self-harm or harm to others it is important to inform emergency services. It is not advisable to try to assess the situation yourself. Close the meeting immediately and seek help.*

GROUP ETIQUETTE:

- **Mutual respect and civility are essential.**
- **F.E.A.S.T. parents share one thing: a child with an eating disorder. All differences should be accepted and embraced: e.g. social, religious, lifestyle, and political.**
- **Caregiver free time is precious. Set a time and place to meet, try to be on time, and set and keep to an END time.**
- **Feel free to bring written materials, books, articles to share. Return all borrowed materials promptly.**
- **We are caregivers, so it is all right to keep cell phones on to stay connected to home. Abrupt exits are acceptable.**
- **Caregiving is time-consuming and unpredictable: meetings may have to be canceled or changed at the last moment.**
- **Discussion should focus on the present and not the past.**
- **It is all right - in fact, it is expected - that parents will not agree on everything. It is only by hearing other points of view that we understand our own.**
- **Refrain from gossip or discussing others in the community who are not at the meeting.**
- **Practice good communication skills: supportive listening, use "I" statements, acknowledge what others say, avoid interrupting and side conversations, gently redirect perseveration. Avoid 'ought,' 'should' and 'must'**
- **Listen more than speaking and give equal time to all present.**
- **Praise one another. Congratulate parents on surviving, perseverance, patience, wisdom, commitment, self-care, educating themselves, and keeping marriages and sibling relationships strong.**
- **There is no obligation to answer any question or reveal any information.**
- **Pay it Forward.**