



## What CAN Parents Do to Help?

When a child is sick, parents are expected to get them the treatment they need, and to take on the responsibility of caregiving until the patient is well. ***Unfortunately, when a child develops an eating disorder, parents are too often told what they should NOT do!*** In addition, they may actually be discouraged from taking on the role of caregiver, and may even be blamed as having contributed to the development of the illness. At F.E.A.S.T. , we believe that parent involvement is key to the successful treatment of eating disorders, and prefer to concentrate on what parents can do to help their children recover.

## Parents CAN...

- Provide a safe environment for recovery in their home
- Seek and evaluate clinical treatment options
- Take control of eating and food until the patient is able to do so independently
- Insist on effective treatment whether the patient is living at home, in hospital, or in long term residential care
- Quit or cut back on other obligations to concentrate on supporting a loved one
- Mothers and fathers can support each other emotionally and practically
- Insist on treatment that ensures full nutrition and normalizing eating behaviors
- Put boundaries on eating disorder and activity behaviors in their homes
- Offer financial assistance while a loved one is out of work
- Refuse to financially support a loved one who is not in effective treatment
- Refuse to support ineffective treatment
- Become educated in eating disorders by consulting evidence-based experts and reading widely in professional and lay literature
- Form educated opinions on treatment
- Insist on communication with the treatment team
- Be part of the treatment team
- Pay for treatment and keep a patient insured
- Educate extended relatives and community about the current science in eating disorders
- Take care of siblings and extended family affected by the illness
- Offer emotional support during the suffering of eating disorder recovery
- Give up activities and habits that conflict with a loved one's recovery
- Insist on patients signing waivers for communication with treatment providers
- Put aside conflicts with spouse or other family members to present a common voice to the patient
- Speak out in the media about how eating disorders affect the whole family
- Get involved with advocacy and education in the eating disorder world
- Make personal changes based on what they learn about eating disorders
- Offer support to other families struggling with this disease
- Seek treatment for themselves if they have illnesses or eating disordered behaviors