

Eating Disorder Toolbox - For a Parent

Support without turning home into a clinic

Watching your child struggle with an eating disorder can bring fear, guilt, frustration and exhaustion. This toolbox focuses on practical ways to stay steady, communicate safely and work alongside professionals while protecting your relationship with your child.

USE THIS TOOLBOX WHEN...	REMEMBER
Meals feel difficult • thoughts are louder • home feels tense • you need words for what is happening	Small, repeated acts of safety matter. Recovery and support can be imperfect and still be meaningful.

Helpful language

- “I can see this is hard. I’m staying with you.”
- “You don’t have to convince me that you’re struggling.”
- “We can dislike the eating disorder without blaming you.”

Try to avoid

- Debates about calories, weight, shape or whether they have ‘eaten enough’.
- Praise focused on weight gain/loss or appearance.
- Threats, shame, comparisons or turning every conversation into food.

Meal support

- Agree roles with the treatment team where possible.
- Keep the atmosphere predictable and neutral.
- Expect distress without treating distress as proof that the meal was wrong.
- Plan a calm post-meal activity.

Parent regulation

- Pause before responding when fear turns into anger.
- Share responsibility with another trusted adult where possible.
- Keep your own support: GP, therapist, carers’ group, friends or family.

What to record for appointments

- Changes in eating/drinking
- Physical symptoms and energy
- Compensatory behaviours you have observed
- Mood, withdrawal, school functioning and sleep
- Questions you want answered

Important: Eating disorders can become medically serious at any body size. Seek professional assessment if you are worried. In an immediate medical emergency or if someone is at immediate risk of harm, use emergency services.

Created for the Space to Breathe Therapy Support Hub.