



Caring Counselling Worthing

Professional Counselling and Supervision

Eating Disorders – A Self-Care Guide for Carers

Caring for someone with an eating disorder can be frightening, exhausting and all-consuming.

This guide offers gentle, practical ideas to help you look after your own wellbeing while supporting your loved one.

You don't need to do everything at once. Take what feels helpful and leave the rest.

1. Prioritising your own wellbeing

Looking after someone with an eating disorder can take up a huge amount of emotional and physical energy.

Making time for yourself isn't selfish — it can help you feel more able to cope with the demands of caring.

You may find it helpful to ask yourself

- What helps me feel a little better?
- A hobby you enjoy
- Gardening or spending time in nature
- Gentle exercise or movement
- Seeing friends
- Quiet time alone

Action step

Write your ideas down and see if you can schedule some time for yourself during the day or week. You might like to experiment with:

- keeping a small object to touch (such as a stone or crystal) as a reminder that you're here, in the present
- breathing exercises (such as box, alternate nostril, or 2-1-4 breathing)
- meditation apps

- the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise: noticing five things you can see, four you can hear, three you can touch, two you can smell and one you can taste

Notes:

2. Making time for each other as a family

Eating disorders can take up a lot of space within families. Making time for connection — even in small ways — can help maintain relationships alongside the caring role.

Some ideas.

- Planning one-to-one time with each family member
- Scheduling time with your partner, such as a walk or shared activity
- Reminding yourselves that you are more than carers

Notes:

3. Enlisting the support of close friends

Caring for someone with an eating disorder can take its toll.

You don't have to manage everything alone, even if asking for help feels difficult. People often want to support you but may not know how. It can help to be specific.

You might ask for:

- practical help (shopping, childcare, meals)
- support around caring tasks
- someone to listen when things feel hard

Action step:

Write a list of practical tasks you could ask for help with, so others can offer support in ways that feel manageable.

My support list:

4. Showing yourself compassion

Caring in this sort of circumstance is incredibly hard. Despite your best intentions, there will be times when things don't go as you hoped — and that doesn't mean you've failed.

You might remind yourself:

- being kind to myself matters too
- self-criticism doesn't help me or the person I care for
- I'm doing the best I can in a difficult situation

Notes:

5. Considering a carer support group

Some carers find it helpful to connect with others who understand what they're going through.

Possible benefits include:

- feeling less alone
- learning from others' experiences
- sharing ideas and coping strategies
- being in a supportive, understanding environment.

POD (Peer Support and Online Development) is an online community and eLearning platform provided by Beat, the UK's eating disorder charity, specifically designed for carers.

<https://elearn.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>

Notes:

6. Taking time to reflect on how you're feeling

Noticing your own emotional and physical responses can help you understand when you might need extra support.

Possible signs you may need additional support include:

- finding it hard to enjoy things you usually like
- feeling constantly exhausted or overwhelmed
- physical symptoms such as headaches or sleep difficulties

If you notice these signs, you might consider speaking to your GP about the support available.

Notes:

7. Considering counselling

Counselling can offer carers a safe, confidential space to talk about the impact caring has had on them. Having time just for you — to reflect, process and be heard — can help you feel less alone and more supported.

Ways you can access counselling

- Speaking to your GP about NHS counselling or referrals
- Checking whether your employer offers an Employee Assistance Programme
- Contacting a private counsellor directly

Notes:

You don't have to face everything at once — and you don't have to face it alone.

For more information and support, visit:

<https://caringcounsellingworthing.co.uk>