

“Let’s make this a no-body-commenting zone and just enjoy ourselves.”



Holiday Season Preparation: A Conversation

Hosted by Belinda Chelius, General Manager of EDQ

Joined by guests:

Leslee Fleming - Carer for her daughter working on recovery

Laura Zuber - Recovered from an Eating Disorder

How do I handle Judgement around Food and Body shaming at holiday meal events?

For Individuals and Carers or Family Members:

- *Plan for the day* - discuss with your loved one or family what foods will be available. Plan if you will be at the event for a full day, or for just a few hours.
- *Discuss treatment team nutritional goals* - and plan for how you or your loved one can try and meet these.
- *Setting expectations/hopes* - what is achievable based on where you/your loved one is at in the recovery journey?
- *Support & encouragement* - sit next to your loved one. Ask for support if you need it.
- *Distraction throughout the meal* - non-food related conversation topics (Christmas cracker jokes / toys can be helpful!)
- *Set boundaries with other guests* - for example, you are not open to feedback on your eating or exercise habits, and not looking for conversation around their eating / exercise habits either.
- *Use online or phone supports* - SANE forums, [Virtual Meal Support](#), Lifeline, 1300MHCare, or phone/text a supportive friend.

For Carers/Family Members:

- *Topics to avoid* - discussions of weight, shape, appearance numbers, diet culture, exercise.
- *Model intuitive eating* - listening to your own hunger/satiety cues; eating for taste and enjoyment; eating a variety of food groups; not labelling foods as 'good' or 'bad', remember, 'food is food!'
- *Provide some encouragement* - for example, acknowledging how challenging this is for them, and that you are proud of their efforts.
- *Show patience* - remembering the significant challenges that your loved one is experiencing, both in the lead up to the meal, and during the meal itself.
- *Consider the language you are using* - how you speak to the eating disorder, and how you provide encouragement to your loved one.
- *Use curious questions* - 'how does this make you feel?' 'how are you feeling at the moment?'
- *Encouragement* - 'I know how hard that was for you, good on you.'
- *Externalising* - 'I can see that the (eating disorder) is giving you a hard time, I am here to support you.'

Do you prepare responses to help you in meal situations?

- Other people are unlikely to understand what you are going through, so it can be helpful to have some prepared responses.
- Having prepared responses can help you to deal with the difficult emotions that may arise.
- What would be the emotional cost to you, to take the time to educate that person fully?
- You can't prepare for everything; sometimes you may need to take a breath and let the comment pass.

"Let's make this a no-body-commenting zone and just enjoy ourselves."

"You don't need to apologize for eating seconds"

"No judgment here—I think eating dessert is a great idea!"

"Let's not give food the power to make us good or bad people."

"What's wrong with being fat?"

"Let's talk about something else."

How do I cope with the guilt of eating a big meal?

- Use distraction. Create a 'kit' of things you find helpful. Try to engage multiple senses at once.
- Bring into practice the tolerance skills you learn in therapy sessions.
- Journaling or listing the emotions can be helpful.
- As a carer, encourage and normalise - "I can see that this is really difficult for you, and I'm here for you. What do you need?"
- As a carer, prompt your loved one to consider what distraction strategies they find helpful.
- As a carer, sitting with a loved one post-meal and asking what they would find most supportive.

How do I stick to a meal plan while things around me are less structured?

- Go through the menus ahead of time and pre-plan what is suitable (find out the menu if possible) - removing the unknown factor.
- Take safe foods with you to family gathering, or perhaps eat your normal meal before you attend the event.
- Depending on your stage of recovery, being spontaneous and trying something new may or may not be helpful.
- Enlist another person who will be willing to eat at the same time as you (in line with your meal plan), even if the other people around you are grazing or eating at different times.

Resources & Services Available

- [Butterfly Foundation](#) Eating Disorder Counselling, available 8am - midnight AEST, 7 days. *Closed public holidays.*
- [Lifeline](#) Crisis Support and Suicide Prevention, available 24-7.
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) Mental Health Counselling, available 24-7.
- [Carers Qld](#) Carer and NDIS Support.
- [Arafmi](#) Carer, Family & NDIS Support, available 24-7.
- [1300 MH CALL](#) Available 24-7.
- [COVID19 Eating Support – Instagram Live](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#) Support for ages 5 - 25, available 24-7.
- [Sane Forums](#) Online Lived Experience and Family & Carer Forums, moderated by health professionals.
- [Shared Table](#) Online Meal Support Training.
- [Emergency Services - 000](#)