



*Recovery is a difficult journey, but it is possible.
There is always hope.
You are worthy of recovery.*

Holiday Season Preparation: A Conversation (Part 2)

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 we have a meal with someone who is in recovery around Christmas?

- While it is important to challenge your loved ones' food rules and eating disorder behaviours, a high-stress event such as Christmas isn't the best time or place to do so.
- *No Food Rules* – It isn't helpful to draw attention to the eating disorder, particular foods, or particular behaviours during large family or Christmas meals. Try not to make food the primary focus or issue and instead aim to model healthy behaviour.
- *Be mindful about triggers* – Be aware and try to minimize possible triggers such as people picking at food and pushing it around, or discussion of diets and fitness after the festive periods. Avoid phrases like "I shouldn't" or "I'm so bad for eating this."
- *Language* – Be mindful of the language that you use in discussing things, even if they are about yourself! Your loved one may very well reflect it inwardly on themselves. Your language can foster an environment that may either assist or hinder recovery. Avoid comments like "you're so brave" or "you're doing so well" – particularly during the mealtime.
- *Planning* – In the context of the holidays, planning is very important. Knowing who is coming can be crucial in anticipating if comments around weight, shape and size will be made. Expecting and preparing for these situations with your loved one can mitigate damage.

- *Carers*, Ensure you are taking time out for yourself during this period and on an ongoing basis. See [Vodcast Episode 3](#) for more information on Carer Fatigue and how to avoid it. Be mindful that care is not a one-size fits all, what might work for you might not work for a loved one and this should be clearly communicated.

“Why should I have to change my behaviour? I don’t have the eating disorder.”

- The same way families change behaviours to make room for loved ones with chronic illness such as cancer and diabetes, making changes to encourage recovery doesn’t mean you have to stop doing what’s right for your life. These changes can be subtle.
- If your loved one sees you engaging in exercise or diet behaviours, don’t be afraid of having that conversation about, “this is what suits my body. You live in a different body from mine, and your body has different needs to mine right now.”
- Externalize the ED from your loved one. It is not your loved one who is controlling these decisions, it is the ED.

“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.”

What is an appropriate piece of advice to give a loved one when you yourself don't know? Where can I start to build this knowledge of what to say to support someone?

- Books and online communities can provide such a strong resource for ED knowledge.
- Social media can be a dangerous place for perpetuating poor body image, but looking for body positive resources can make it a great place to find information and support around ED.
- Unfollowing anyone who makes you unhappy is empowering for individuals and carers.
- Language is important. Recognize when you are talking to the eating disorder instead of your loved one and do not engage in it.

What to do when you don't have EDQ or other carers to talk to when your regular supports are not available?

- When your regular supports are not available over Christmas, online reading and support can be a great resource. The [Carer Help Kit](#) is full of helpful information.
- Draw on the information you've gathered in your experience as a carer. What have you learnt along the way?
- Make it known that you as a carer are willing to learn and understand the issues inside and out. Sometimes just knowing you are willing and able to listen and understand can be so empowering for your loved one.
- Be patient and understanding. The ED will present things that will be uncomfortable and challenging to hear as a carer, but remember, this is the ED speaking over your loved one.
- View the resources and services below for alternative supports over the festive period.

What if your home or family environment is not safe for you to be in during recovery?

- You do not need to remain in that environment, or spend time with family, just because it is Christmas or a holiday.
- If there is an option for a safe space, it's perfectly okay to go somewhere else for your recovery.
- It can be such an important step in finding the strength to say *I am worthy of recovery*, and whatever you need to achieve for that, you have to go and find.
- Find time away from toxic environments, even if for a short time – go for a walk with a friend or take some time to yourself to listen to music or read a book.
- Part of recovery can look like choosing to put yourself first and that's a hard thing to do! It can be difficult and challenging to put your needs first, embrace saying *I am worthy of recovery*.

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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.
- [Eating Disorders Family Australia](#) Carer & Family Support
- [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.
- [General Mental Health Supports](#) available online
- [Emergency Services - 000](#)