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Healing Together Tips to help couples navigate eating disorder recovery together

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This pamphlet is designed to help you successfully navigate eating disorder recovery within your relationship.

Inside, you will find tips for you as a couple, as well as tips for each partner. Following these tips can help you navigate recovery and strengthen your relationship.

Whether you have an eating disorder, or you are supporting your partner during recovery, remember that there is hope, and full recovery is possible.



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Healing Together

Tips to help couples navigate eating disorder recovery together.



For the supporting partner.

Do your research. Avoid believing the myths about eating disorders. Research EDs in general and your partner's specific ED so that you can better understand and support them.

Separate your partner from their eating disorder. See the ED as an outside force on your partner. Separation will help you have empathy and compassion rather than blame.

Get help for yourself, too. ED recovery doesn't only impact your partner; it also impacts you. Consider seeing a therapist who specializes in EDs to get advice and discuss your feelings.



For the partner with an ED.

Be honest with your partner. Secrecy protects your ED. Being truthful will help you recover by combatting your ED and allowing your partner to know how to support you better.



Identify ways you can be physically intimate. EDs often result in avoidance of physical intimacy due to body insecurities. Make a list of touch that you are comfortable with and share it with your partner.

Trust your partner more than your eating disorder. Your ED tells you lies about your worth and appearance. Listen when your partner affirms you and take their word over your ED.

For the couple.

Don't make your partner your savior.
Don't try to be your partner's savior. Recovery is the responsibility of the person with the ED. The supporting partner is not responsible for success or failure.

Become aware of the ways you support beauty ideals. Supporting unrealistic ideals can impact both partners. Limit the pressure to meet these ideals by communicating acceptance of your partner's body.

Make a plan for dealing with difficulties. Recovery is not smooth; relapses and problems are likely. Determine what you will do, who you will tell, and how you will cope.

Identify ways you can support one another. Compliment each other often on nonphysical attributes. Have weekly check-ins to identify where both of you could use more support and come up with ways to provide this support.

