

HOW TO START A CONVERSATION IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT HAVE AN EATING DISORDER

Beat
Eating disorders

RED
CAN

How to start a conversation if you think you might have an eating disorder

If you're starting to feel worried about your eating, thoughts, or emotions around food, you deserve support – even if you're not sure whether you need help. Eating disorders can be confusing and isolating, and it is common to feel scared, ashamed, or uncertain about speaking up. Needing support doesn't depend on how "bad" things feel.

You don't have to wait until you feel that things have gotten worse. Telling someone – even one trusted person – is an important step toward feeling understood and getting help.

If you feel in crisis, you can reach out to emergency services on their behalf, or offer to take them to A&E. For medical advice, you can call 111.

The Beat website has some more information on support services available.

How to Approach the Conversation

How to Approach the Conversation – Choosing the Right Person

Think about who in your life feels safe, kind, or understanding. Consider:

- Someone you've spoken to about emotions or mental health before
- Someone who is patient or a good listener
- A friend, family member, partner, teacher, mentor, colleague, or health professional
- Someone you trust will respond calmly and with care

If no one feels quite right, you can talk first to:

- Beat Helpline advisors (confidential, non-judgmental)
- Your local eating disorder charity
- Peer support groups
- A counsellor or therapist, you can find one via [Beat's Helpfinder](#)

You are not alone – there are people ready to listen.

More Ways You Can Start the Conversation

You don't need to have the perfect script – different approaches work for different people. You could try talking in person, writing down how you're feeling, talking over the phone or sending a message. Or a combination of these if you feel it would help to prepare before approaching the conversation.

Speak in Person (if you can)

Before talking, you might write down:

- What thoughts and feelings you've been having
- How long you've been struggling
- What kind of support would help you right now

You can start with:

- *"I've been finding things really hard lately and I think it's affecting my eating."*
- *"I'm scared to talk about this, but I think I might have an eating disorder."*
- *"I'm worried about my relationship with food and my feelings/thoughts about it."*

Use a Letter, Text, or Email

Writing it down can feel safer and help you express your thoughts clearly. You can share what you're experiencing, what you need, and why you're reaching out now.

Talk Over Phone or Messaging app

This can feel less intense and give you space to gather your thoughts.

Get support from people who know what you're going through first

Hearing how others started the conversation can make it feel less overwhelming and remind you that you're not alone.

What If They Don't React Well?

A negative reaction does *not* mean:

- you're not ill
- you don't deserve care
- you were wrong to speak up

Often people react from fear, confusion, or lack of understanding.

What you can do:

- Give them time to process.
- Direct them to trustworthy information ([Beat's website](#) and [REDCAN's website](#) are good starting points).
- Consider talking to someone else – one person's reaction doesn't predict the next.
- Set boundaries: *"It's not helpful for me to talk about X, but I'd appreciate support with Y."*

You deserve help now – keep reaching out.

Next Steps

Once you've told someone, consider:

- [Making a GP appointment](#) (you can take someone with you).
- Seeking counselling or therapy.
- Contacting Beat for guidance, joining one of their online support groups or visiting [Beat's Helpfinder](#).
- Visiting [REDCAN.org.uk/charities](#) to find local support.
- Asking someone to help you plan what you want to say to a doctor or someone who can support you at work, school or college.

If you need a trusted adult (for young people or anyone who may be vulnerable)

- Choose someone who feels safe.
- Find a quiet, private time.
- Use "I" statements to express how you feel.
- You can write a letter if speaking feels too hard.

No matter how you begin, reaching out is an act of strength – and the first step toward feeling better.

Produced by Beat in collaboration with the Regional Eating Disorders Charity Alliance/Network (REDCAN).



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