

RECOVERY SESSION:

WHO IS ON MY SUPPORT TEAM?



BODY BRAVE
recovery for every body

DISCLAIMER

This resource is a living document and is open to change. It was created by students from within the Body Brave community and may not be fully representative of the spectrum of experience. If you have any suggestions to improve this resource or lived experiences that you don't see represented here, please email us at info@bodybrave.ca.

WHO IS ON MY SUPPORT TEAM?

Your support team is whoever supports you, wherever you are on your recovery journey. They care for you and your well-being, and show you that in any number of ways, including:

- Listening to you actively and without judgment
- Asking you questions about your experience (with respect for your boundaries)
- Offering help and support
- Willing to learn more about eating disorders, and how they can best support you
- Empowering you
- Celebrating your wins
- Demonstrating mutual trust, respect, acceptance, and safety

No two people's circles or teams of support will look the same - it's about what is important and available to you. On that note, no one element of your support team needs to cover all aspects of your support, which is why it's helpful to have some element from multiple "support pillars".

"Healing takes time, and asking for help is a courageous step."

- Mariska Hargitay

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PILLARS OF SUPPORT

Pillars of support are the groups of people that support us, having support from multiple pillars can help ensure that we are supported in sustainable ways. The four main pillars of support Body Brave identifies are 1) family and friends, 2) work and/or school, 3) social community and 4) professional supports. Here are some examples of who might be in those 4 pillars.

Family & Friends

- parents
- siblings
- partner/spouse
- friends
- extended family (grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles)
- godparents/guide-parents
- pets

School or Work

- coworkers/peers
- supervisors
- teachers/professors
- counselors
- academic advisors
- student associations

Social Communities

- faith communities
- clubs/extracurricular activities
- community centres
- self-help groups
- teams
- online support groups
- chat rooms
- peer-to-peer services

Professional Supports

- Body Brave, or other community-based services
- doctors
- dietitians
- social workers/psychotherapists

WHAT DOES SUPPORT LOOK LIKE?

Whether you want some guidance on how to communicate the ways in which you need someone's support, or you want to support someone who is struggling with disordered eating, we have compiled some "shoulds" and "should nots" for what you might consider when looking for support and figuring out what supports are best for you.

Shoulds

- **Do research.** Eating disorders are vast and complex, and educating yourself on eating disorders can help prepare you for conversations, and takes the burden of education off the person suffering. It also may help you to feel prepared for conversations about it.
- **Create a safe environment for conversations.** It is difficult to be vulnerable in any space, but especially one where you don't feel comfortable. Avoid having conversations in a triggering setting, like around food or with others who may not be as supportive. Give enough time for them to open up at their own pace.
- **Consider your language carefully.** Try to use "I" statements so as to not accuse them of anything. "Mirroring language," where you use specific words that they use in your responses, can help to show you're listening. If they don't outright say that they have an eating disorder, don't call it that, but instead use whatever language they do.

Should Nots

- **Avoid offering simple solutions or platitudes.** Again, eating disorders are *complex*. If you have thought of a "solution", there's a high chance that your loved one has already considered that. It may also make it seem to them that you don't take it seriously or aren't listening to them.
- **Don't give ultimatums or try to shame into changing behaviour.** This can cause your loved one to feel unsafe sharing with you, and lead them to further hide their behaviour or engage in their eating disorder in secrecy. They also likely already feel shame and like they can't overcome their disorder without hearing it from you.
- **Avoid comments on body or appearance.** Eating disorders are not about vanity, but are a mental health issue related to coping and control. Comments like, "you're looking healthier" can be twisted by the eating disorder voice to be an insult, even when you mean it as a compliment. It only encourages preoccupation with their body.

1) [National Eating Disorders Collaboration - What to say and do](#)

2) [Help Guide - Helping Someone with an Eating Disorder](#)

TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR SUPPORT TEAM

Identifying people or groups to be part of your support team can be confusing if you aren't sure where to start. Asking those people and groups for support is a whole additional beast to tackle. To make this process easier, we've put together some tips for creating a support team.

Reflect on who or what stands out to you as a positive in your life.

- Maybe there's a hobby you've been thinking about taking up, or a classmate who you're always happy to hear from in a lecture. Maybe there's a walking trail you've wanted to visit, or a family member you haven't connected with in a while.
- Surrounding yourself with the people or things in your life that already make you feel positive in your day-to-day is a great start to identifying areas you can rely on for support when you're struggling.

Plan ahead

- Think about what initiating adding someone or something to your Support Team would look like by going through the 5 W's:
 - Who would you reach out to for this? What would you say to them? Where would this conversation happen? When would this conversation happen? Why do you want them to be part of your support team?
- Planning ahead will help you to feel more prepared and clear about what you're doing, and will avoid having this vulnerable conversation in a way that's uncomfortable for either you or them

Set and respect boundaries

- Having conversations about your needs regarding your disordered eating can be really difficult for you, and may be a lot to take in for the person you're speaking with. Make time in the conversation for both of you to communicate your boundaries, and prepare a self-care plan for after the conversation.

Identify which supports help you address which of your needs

- Who is a cheerleader that you love to celebrate your successes with? Who gives great advice when you have questions? Who is good company when you feel lonely? Make a list of those in your Support Team, and identify your favourite thing about them or what makes them an integral member of your support team. Then you can go back to this list when you aren't sure who to turn to.

BODY IMAGE ACTIVITIES

Reflection Prompts

Choose a prompt to reflect on. Set a timer on your phone for 3-5 minutes and reflect on these prompts, whether in the form of writing or just thinking about them!

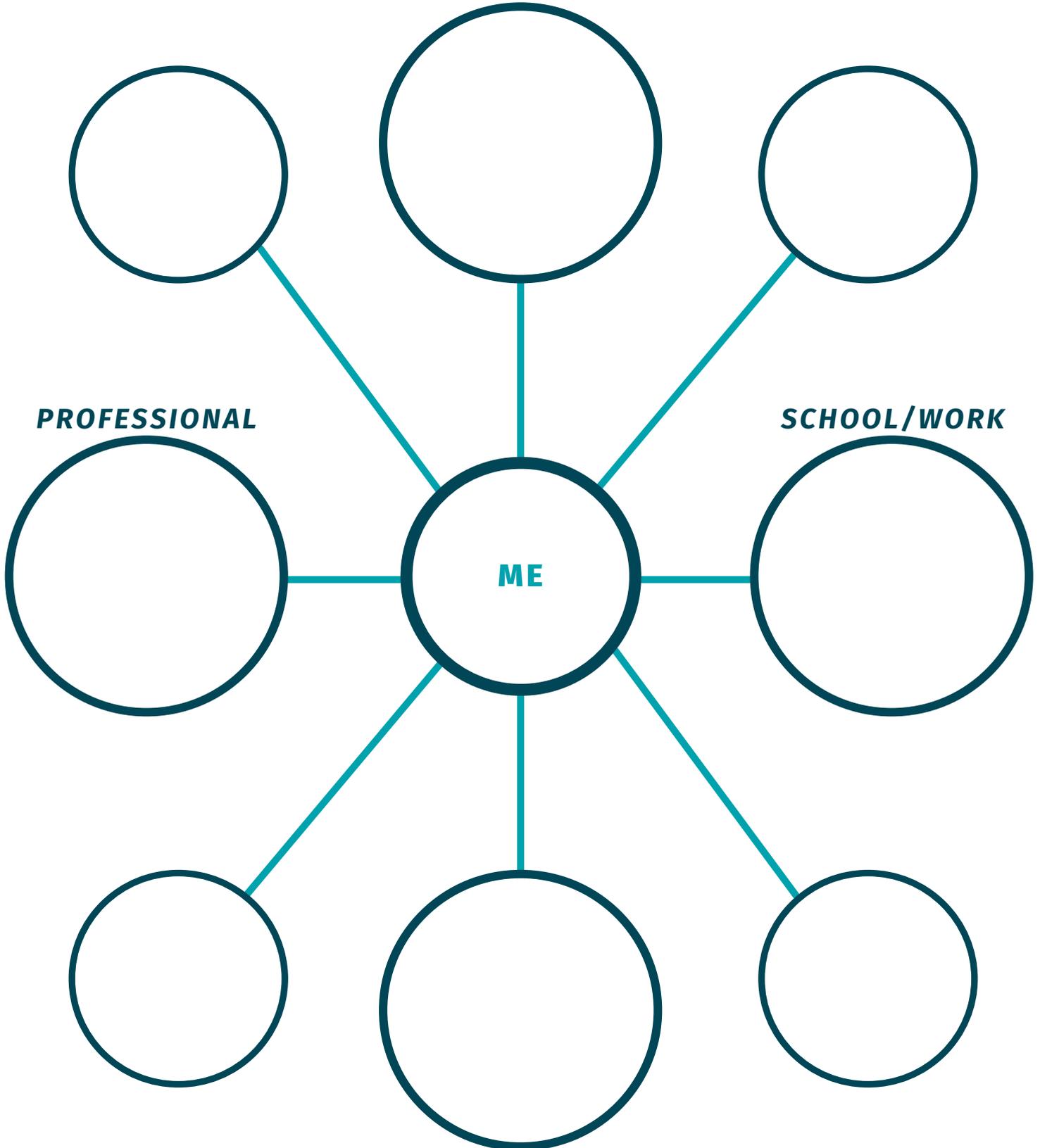
- *How do I share how I'm feeling with those around me?*
- *What do I need from those around me?*
- *Who are the people in my life that I can turn to?*
- *What are three ways your eating disorder/disordered eating has negatively impacted your relationships?*
- *Imagine that you opened up to someone about your eating disorder. What would you want them to say to you?*
- *Think of a time when you felt really proud of yourself/your body. Who could you share this achievement with?*

**Prompts were partially sourced from Kids Help Phone's [Wheel of Wellbeing](#), which you can review if you're looking for more gratitude prompts.

Build Your Team

It can be difficult to know where to start when it comes to creating your support team, or knowing who to put on it. Based on the information in this handout, try filling out the below template with people, agencies, or groups that you could potentially add to your support team. Think about which family and/or friends, colleagues and/or classmates, online and/or in-person social groups, and agencies or organizations in your neighbourhood that could support you in your recovery journey.

FAMILY/FRIENDS



SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

FURTHER LEARNING

Podcasts

Food Psych with Christy Harrison A podcast about intuitive eating, body image, and diet culture to help challenge restrictive dieting behaviors and learn some useful body-confidence strategies along the way.

The Body Image Podcast with Corrine Dobbas, MS, RD The Body Image Podcast is a podcast about body image and the many layers that go into making peace with our bodies. Like intuitive eating, self-compassion, mental health, self-care, body and size acceptance, embodiment, rejecting diet culture, and more.

The Recovery Warrior Show A podcast dedicated to boosting the emotional intelligence and resilience of people struggling with depression, anxiety and eating disorders.

TED Talks

[Why we all need to practice emotional first aid | Guy Winch](#)

[Asking for help is a strength not a weakness | Michele L Sullivan](#)

[What kids can teach adults about asking for help | Yeyoon Kim](#)

Reading

[Reaching Out for Help is Not a Sign of Weakness - NEDA](#)

[Eating Disorders: Asking for Help - Huffpost](#)

[The Care Team - National Eating Disorders Collaboration](#)

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