

## Put Yourself In Their Shoes – Understanding Those With Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are complicated which makes it very difficult for others to understand. Why doesn't this loved one just eat? Can't this person see that he/she isn't fat? How can anyone continue practicing self-destructive behaviors? Shouldn't my loved one be better by now?

Food-related behaviors are symptoms of an eating disorder. Until the individual works through the underlying issues, there's little that can be done to completely stop the behaviors. How can others show compassion to a loved one with a disorder they have a hard time understanding? How can they put themselves in the shoes of those who behave in such puzzling ways?

Here are a few tips to put yourself in the shoes of the special person you want to see break free of these self-destructive behaviors.

1. Imagine that you feel everything in your life is out of control and you feel helpless to change any of it.
2. Think of something you've done in your life which has caused you to feel ashamed. Is it something that others see every day?
3. What are your most intense fears? Imagine facing them every day.
4. Think of a time you felt misunderstood and alone.
5. Have you ever had difficulty changing your thoughts or behaviors? Did you feel it was impossible to do so?
6. Do you ever do what you know isn't best for you, yet feel that you can't help it? Do you feel judged by others around you because of it?
7. Are you afraid to show your emotions? Do you ever struggle to find healthy ways to express yourself?
8. Do you expect perfection from yourself in every area of your life?
9. Are you the type of person who is always so concerned about the needs of others that you ignore your own?
10. Do you ever feel torn about what to do? You know what's best, but are you drawn to opt for what is comfortable, yet not good for you, instead?

These are some examples of how those with eating disorders sometimes feel. I'm sure anyone can relate to at least one thing on this list. Sure, these thoughts and feelings may not have led you to practicing food-related behaviors, but they may have affected you in other ways. And in that regard, I bet you'd like others to put themselves in your shoes and try to understand and show compassion for you. We all appreciate feeling accepted and understood.