

Family-Based Treatment

When your child has been diagnosed with an eating disorder, it's natural to feel frightened and alone. Please know that with your help, your child has an excellent chance of making a full recovery. That recovery will depend in part on your ability to educate yourself about eating disorders and make the best treatment choices for your family.

A good place to begin is with the general recommendations for treating anorexia nervosa (AN) and bulimia nervosa (BN). Start by reading the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines, the American Psychiatric Association guidelines, and the position paper on ED treatment from the Society of Adolescent Medicine. (These are all available full text on [maudsleyparents.org](https://www.maudsleyparents.org) in the Quick Reference section under "Treatment Guidelines.")

While the goal of all eating disorder treatment includes normalizing eating behavior and restoring physical and mental health, there are different approaches to accomplishing this. In Family-Based Treatment, also known as the Maudsley approach, parents are the cornerstone of their child's recovery. Maudsley treatment acknowledges the powerful bond between parents and children, and empowers parents to use their love for and knowledge of their child to help her recover.

If you think Maudsley treatment might be the right choice for your family, read more about what the approach is and isn't. (See "What is Maudsley?" and "Maudsley Misconceptions" at [maudsleyparents.org](https://www.maudsleyparents.org).) You can also find articles, recommendations for further reading, and family stories showing how real parents used the Maudsley approach to help their children recover on the website. The more you know, the better able you'll be to choose an appropriate therapist and work with your treatment providers in a calm and confident way.

Maudsley treatment ideally centers around a Maudsley therapist. Start by interviewing potential therapists, asking for an overview of what treatment entails and what you can expect from sessions. Ask the therapist to describe his/her treatment philosophy. In many traditional therapies, parents are shut out of the treatment and therapy processes; they're told to "talk about other things" and to avoid "being the food police." By contrast, a Maudsley therapist acts as a "consultant" to parents as *they* help their child recover.

In addition to a Maudsley therapist, you'll work with other treatment providers as well, including a doctor who will provide medical oversight. You may also work with a psychiatrist and/or consult a nutritionist. We recommend interviewing these professionals before beginning treatment, to make sure they will truly support Maudsley treatment and that all of you are on the same page. Consistency of message is a key component to family-based treatment.

Because the Maudsley approach is still relatively new, many families can't find a therapist trained in FBT in their community. Another option is to find professionals who haven't been trained specifically in FBT but who are supportive of the treatment and who will work with you. "Working with a Non-Maudsley Team" written by a mom offers advice on putting together, and working, with a team if you don't have access to a therapist trained in FBT. We also recommend reading Chapter 10 in *Help Your Teenager Beat an Eating Disorder* by Lock and le Grange, "Staying Empowered and Informed," for more advice on working with your child's treatment team.

Non-home care

If you feel your child needs care outside your home—in a hospital, residential clinic, or day program—you can still be involved in her care. In fact, your involvement can help prevent relapse once she returns home. Talk it over with your child's treatment providers. Read Chapter 8 in *Help Your Teenager Beat an Eating Disorder*, "Playing a Supporting Role."