

Advice for Fathers and Husbands

It is difficult for most men to understand the impact that food, shape, and weight have on the women in their lives. The reason for this is that a man's identity is mainly built around his performance, not so much his appearance.

Women also values performance, strength, and a sharp mind, yet the major question in the heart of every woman is: "Am I beautiful?" This is not an idle notion, but rather something God has placed in the heart of every woman, and it goes hand in hand with our feminine side.

The problem occurs with the unrealistic and unattainable picture of "true beauty" that is painted by the media and the world around us. Many young girls of normal weight go on diets and most women are constantly preoccupied with obtaining the "perfect" body. Seeing that dieting is the precursor to eating disorders, millions of women and girls that are currently on a diet are at risk of developing such problems.

Here are some of the things that you as a husband or father might do, or not do, to make this struggle a little easier on the women in your life.

DO

Do pray for her as often as possible

Do pray with her, especially in times of great discouragement

Do read and learn more about eating disorders

Do accept her right to an independent life and decisions

Do be a model of good eating habits, exercise and a positive self image

Do be supportive and talk to her about her struggle (when there's no food around)

Do be caring and non judgmental when you have these talks

Do listen to her, but refrain from giving advice or imposing your will on her

Do let her know that you care about her, and often remind her that there is more to her than weight and appearance

Do encourage her to get professional help

Do accept your limitations and seek support for yourself

Do talk to her about the pressures women face to lose weight and feel attractive

Do show respect for her and other women who daily overcome great obstacles

DON'T

Don't preach

Don't force her to eat or go on a diet

Don't make comments that put women down, this will contribute to her low self-image

Don't restrict food choices and amounts

Don't monitor her eating (even if she asks you to)

Don't suggest going on a diet together, competition doesn't help

Don't play nutritionist or counselor

Don't give advice or make comments about food, nutrition or exercise

Don't comment on other people's weight or appearance

Don't make excuses for her eating disorder and thus enable her

Don't blame yourself or others for her eating disorder

Don't use money or awards to control her eating behavior

Don't make eating out or mealtime a battle

Don't try and control the situation or take charge of her life, she will only resent you

It is impossible for anyone to do all the above things. Use it more as a guideline.

The best thing you can do for your wife or daughter is to give her lots of love and support. Also, make sure to take good care of your own spiritual, mental and physical health so that you can be there when she needs you.

If there is some strain in the relationship with your wife or daughter, it would be a good idea to get prayer or counseling to change certain behavior in you that contributes to the whole situation.

Just remember; love them, love them, love them, and never stop praying for their release from this agonizing battle. We all go through trying times in our lives and we all struggle with weaknesses from time to time. Tomorrow might be their turn to pray for and support you.

- Here is a name of a book that might help you better understand the heart cry of the woman in your life. It is co-authored by a husband and wife team: *Captivating* by John and Stacy Eldredge
- I also recommend this book for yourself to better understand the role God has created for you as the head of your home: *Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge

Thank you for being there for the women in your life, it makes all the difference!

Heleen Woest