

## Eating Disorders Awareness: How You Can Help

National Eating Disorders Awareness Week 2019 is observed Monday February 25 through Sunday March 3, with a goal of educating and helping those living with an eating disorder, as well as friends and family members who want to help.

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**Kathy Franczak, OSF HealthCare Eating Disorder Program Counselor**

“There is a lot that is still not known about eating disorders, and contrary to belief, there are a lot of people that struggle with it. So when we have an awareness week, more people can be reached, more people can understand what an eating disorder is, then we have the ability to help more people and they can get the treatment that they need.”

However approaching a person about a possible eating disorder can be an intimidating task. If you are concerned that someone might have an eating disorder, Franczak suggests speaking with them using "I" statements such as "I am concerned about..." without placing any blame on the person you are trying to help.

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**Kathy Franczak, OSF HealthCare Eating Disorder Program Counselor**

“Shame and guilt are some of those core issues that a lot of people have when they have an eating disorder. The first step, I would say, is number one: don't ignore it. I think that people think, 'Oh, it's just a phase, it'll go away.' Trust your gut and really address that person, but do so in a very caring way, in a very compassionate way, tell them that you love and care about them, but then say, 'I'm worried about you because, this is why.'”

Another thing to be aware of: Franczak says many people have body insecurity issues, but off-handed comments can do more damage than we think. She advises that before a person complains about their body or weight, they should stop and think what kind of impact those words can have.

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**Kathy Franczak, OSF HealthCare Eating Disorder Program Counselor**

“With summer coming up, with New Year's resolutions that we just met, with Thanksgiving and Christmas, people will talk about, 'I was bad today,' or 'Oh I have to go on a diet tomorrow,' and I think that's something that as a culture we have to be aware of the kind of language we use. It can trigger your son or daughter, it can trigger a family member, it can trigger your spouse.”

There are programs to help. The OSF Saint Francis Medical Center [Eating Disorders Program](#) offers outpatient counseling, an intensive outpatient program, and a partial hospitalization program. Information is available by calling (309) 655-2738.

There is also a weekly support group on the OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center Campus in Peoria. The group meets on Wednesday evenings from 6:16 - 7:30 PM in the lower level of the Allied Building at 320 E Armstrong Avenue in Peoria.

There are two groups that meet – people struggling with eating disorders and those who support them. The meetings are free, and no registration is required, Additional resources can be found through the National Eating Disorders Association [website](#).