



## Supporting Parents in Eating Disorder Treatment: Guiding Skills, Reducing Harm, Promoting Recovery

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Parents are a crucial resource in the treatment and recovery of children and adolescents with eating disorders. However, most parents enter this role without sufficient knowledge or skills to understand and manage the nature of the eating disorder. In the absence of guidance, this often leads to responses that unintentionally maintain or worsen the illness, such as accommodating eating disorder demands, withdrawing emotionally, or reacting with anger, frustration, or blame. These patterns can place significant strain on the parent–child relationship and negatively affect recovery.

Drawing on *The Parent Guide to Eating Disorders* by Evelina Linder, this workshop focuses on the professional responsibility to actively support, educate, and guide parents so they can respond to the eating disorder in helpful and recovery-oriented ways. The approach is applicable across evidence-based treatment models, including Family-Based Treatment (FBT) and cognitive-behavioural therapies adapted for eating disorders (e.g. CBT E), as well as integrative and stepped-care settings.

Participants will explore how parental behaviour is often best understood as a result of fear, lack of knowledge, and emotional overload rather than resistance or unwillingness. The workshop highlights how clinicians can help parents develop practical skills, emotional regulation, and a clearer understanding of eating disorder psychopathology. By supporting parents,

professionals can reduce relational damage, strengthen parental self-efficacy, and improve alignment between home and treatment.

The overall aim is to enhance clinicians' ability to work collaboratively with parents in a non-blaming, structured, and hopeful framework that increases the child's chances of recovery.

The workshop is highly interactive and closely aligned with clinical realities in eating disorder services. Short theoretical inputs are combined with practical exercises focused on translating knowledge into everyday clinical work with parents.

Participants will work with common parental responses to eating disorders. In small groups, participants examine how parental responses and behaviours often arise from uncertainty and fear, and how targeted professional guidance can help parents respond differently. Role-play exercises allow participants to practice key conversations, including how to explain eating disorder mechanisms to parents, address unhelpful patterns without blame, and provide clear, compassionate guidance. Scenarios demonstrate how similar parent-support strategies can be applied within both FBT and CBT E, with different emphases depending on the treatment context.