**Get Involved: Become an ED Advocate**

**Share Your Story!**

One of the best ways to fight stigma is to hear the stories of those effected most. It can be scary and vulnerable to speak up about your journey, the hard points and the positive turns. However, it can also be incredibly empowering and rewarding, especially when you feel you are helping others to reach out and seek help.

BANA’s administrative team always welcomes personal recovery stories, and is able to connect those with lived-experience to multi-media sources to get the narrative to the public.

There are many options to do so (ie: our magazine, podcasts, media channels in our community, volunteering, conferences, etc.), and our administrative team will work closely with you to ensure you are aware of all risks involved in sharing your story, but also to support you in navigating the world of being a public voice and advocate.

If you are interested in sharing your story or providing a testimonial, at your own discretion (please note: this is entirely voluntary), please feel free to contact:

BANA’s general email: **info@bana.ca**

BANA’s executive director, Luciana Rosu-Sieza: **luciana@bana.ca**

*(\*\*\*RISK DISCLAIMER: sharing your story with the public may open opportunity for unsolicited harm (eg. emotional harm), loss, defamation, or third-party sharing of personal information, particularly online – for example: negative comments on social media feeds, or online cache’s that may exchange user-information. Please consider this before reaching out to BANA to share your story).*

**Contact Your MPP and Get Your Loved Ones to Do the Same!**

Please join us in asking the Government of Ontario to make eating disorders a priority by increasing its investments in eating disorder programs, treatment, and training.

Visit the URL below and use the contact information for your local MPP to advocate!

<https://www.ola.org/en/members/current/contact-information>

We’ll make it easy… just copy and paste the message below in your email to your MPP!

“As a constituent in this riding, I am writing to you to express my concerns about the lack of resources for individuals and families suffering from an eating disorder.

Over 900,000 Ontarians have an eating disorder. If not treated, the impact can be lifelong chronic illness and even death. In fact, eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness, yet government funded treatment in Ontario is scarce and, in some regions of the province, non-existent.

We are in a crisis and we need the Government of Ontario to take immediate action to provide access to treatment to those who need it. While the Government has committed to investing in prevention and early detection programs for children and youth, there has been no commitment to increasing community-based eating disorder treatment in the province of Ontario.

We need:

- A stepped-care government funded system that starts in the community and ends in the community and provides access for prevention, early intervention and specialized treatment. We know that the earlier an eating disorder is diagnosed and treated, the better the outcomes;

- More training and resources for family physicians so that they can detect and treat eating disorders at an early stage, and refer to appropriate specialists before a crisis occurs; and

- The Government to take eating disorders seriously. Eating disorders are not a choice and they deserve the same attention and investment as cancer, heart disease, and all adequately funded illnesses.”

**Lead by Example!**

One of the most powerful ways to shift the narrative around eating, food, weight and shape is to lead by example. Think about the societal and cultural shifts that may need to happen in order to make our world more recovery-supportive. Here are some tips to consider, as well as links to resources where you can learn more about leading the way to change.

* **Be mindful of your food language.** Avoid value-based comments about appearance and food – try not to imply that certain foods are better than others. Avoid commenting on what and how much others are eating, and promote the concept “all foods fit”. Allow others to eat for themselves and trust their own bodies, without inserting your opinion or beliefs about food/eating. Move away from engaging in those breakroom diet discussions, and explore terms that are less value-oriented when referring to “fun foods”.
* **Move away from “Fat Talk”.** Eliminate talking about anyone’s bodies, period – even when your intention is to be complimentary, or is out of concern for the individual. Compliments can be just as triggering, as they demonstrate positive attention comes from “acceptable” appearance, and simultaneously imply social consequences if you aren’t losing weight or matching the “ideal”. Make a pact with your friends to stop engaging in the self-depreciating weight/shape talk, and keep each other accountable. Move away from the term “feeling fat”, and replace it with the names of sensations and emotions you are *actually* sensing. Encourage others to move away from judging peoples’ worthiness off of the way they look/their weight.
* **Encourage others to learn more, or share what you’ve learned.** Try not to become the primary educator, because it can be triggering to do so when you have had an ED (and not everyone will be open to learning what you have to share). However, try to encourage others to do more learning on their own, or direct them to the resources you found helpful.
* **Stop supporting the diet industry.** Major culprits of media messages that are anti-food and anti-body are companies and professionals within or paid by the diet industry. The more the diet industry continues to profit, the more those messages will push ahead and impact the culture/society around us. Instead, choose to support recovery-positive influencers, companies and professionals, and considering letting go of “a life of dieting” in order to work towards balance and acceptance for all. If weight is posing a medical concern, focus discussions on “health behaviours”, rather than weight loss – no, dieting is not a “health behaviour”.
* **Unfollow accounts that perpetuate the problem.** It’s time for a social media “clean-up”. By following influencers who promote the diet industry, unhealthy exercise, appetite suppressants, or any other initiatives that suggest certain foods or body types are “better” than others, you are indirectly contributing to the stigmatizing narrative. The fewer followers they have, the smaller their reach, thereby the less influence they have. Every time you see a post by these accounts, you may also be subconsciously triggering yourself and/or reinforcing the very beliefs you want to move away from. Go through who you follow on all of the social media platforms you are on, and hit them with the “unfollow” button if they are anti-recovery.

**Explore and Connect with Resources!**

* **Where to Learn More About EDs:**

<https://nedic.ca/>
<https://nied.ca/>

<https://bana.ca/abouteatingdisorders/>

* **How to Help Others Who May Be Struggling with an ED:**

<https://bana.ca/top-5-questions/>

* **Get Training on Eating Disorder Treatment (for mental health professionals):**

**CBT-E:** <https://www.cbte.co/for-professionals/training-in-cbt-e/>
**CBT-T:** <http://cbt-t.group.shef.ac.uk/training-and-supervision/>

* **Help Primary Care Reduce Weight Bias & Stigma:**

<https://balancedviewbc.ca/>

**Bring in BANA’s Health Promotion!**

BANA offers FREE educational presentations to the community, at your request. Our health promotion team has visited schools, businesses and organizations, healthcare settings, etc for the purposes of prevention and early intervention, raising awareness, educating and reducing stigma. Topics include: self-esteem, body image, nutrition, physical activity, size acceptance, body-based harassment, media/social influences and more.

If you feel your workplace, academic setting, extracurricular-group, or business/company could benefit from a presentation, contact our health promotion team to determine what most suits the needs of your group! Don’t wait for your leaders to land on the idea – advocate and bring the idea to them! Make a request and take initiative to become more informed!

For more information on our health promotion work, or for our teams’ contact information, visit: <https://bana.ca/health-promotion/>