

The New Maudsley Approach Animal Analogies

The emotional responses....

The jellyfish Too Much Emotion and Too Little Control

Some carers may be unable to regulate their own intense emotional responses to the ED. Their distress and anger is transparent to all, this gives the message that this carer needs looking after and at the very least needs to be treated with kid gloves. In this sea of emotion, it is hard to steer a clear path. Also, like a jelly fish overt anger and anxiety can exert a poisonous sting with the same uncontrolled emotions being mirrored by Edi. Unfortunately, this serves to strengthen the eating disorder hold. The downside is that these 'sad and mad' emotions escalate causing tears, tempers, sleepless nights and exhaustion in all parties.

The ostrich Avoidance of Emotion

The ostrich finds it hard to cope with the volcanic situation which often arises when trying to tackle the difficult problem of living with an eating disorder. Emotions and the complexities of human behaviour are too chaotic and confusing. The ostrich literally prefers to put his/her head down into the sand. This is something he/she knows he/she can confidently do, avoiding what seems too hard. The downside is that Edi may misinterpret this approach, seeing you as uncaring and end up feeling unloved. Self-esteem is sapped away. Additionally, the concealment of emotions sets an unhelpful example for Edi to follow. Setting an example of emotional honesty and spreading the concept that having controlled emotions is normal and acceptable human behaviour, will aid Edi in coming to terms with their own difficulties with emotional expression. Living with others who can and are able to convey their feelings with words will aid Edi in changing their only way of articulating their own emotions which currently is through food.

The behavioural responses....

The kangaroo Trying to make everything right

This type of carer does everything to protect by taking over all aspects of Edi's life. They treat Edi with kid gloves, letting them jump into the kangaroo pouch in an effort to avoid any upset or stress. The downside of this type of caring is that your loved one fails to learn how to approach and master life's challenges. She/he only feels safe living in this limbo land suspended in a child-like cocoon unable to visualize taking on the world in all its colour or the mantle of adulthood.

The rhinoceros  **uses force and logic to win the day**

Fuelled by stress, exhaustion and frustration, or simply one's own temperament, the rhino attempts to persuade and convince by argument and confrontation. The downside is that even when your loved one does obey, confidence to continue to do so without assistance is not developed. In fact, the more likely response to a rhino "in a china shop" is to argue back with an even stronger eating disorder voice. An outcome of this is that, for example, the more the ED minx retaliates, the more the Eating Disorder identity is consolidated, embedded and validated.

Remember that the more you argue for change, the more resistance you are likely to face and you will give Edi the opportunity to practice arguments for the status quo. This allows the eating disorder to embed itself more deeply. A key skill is allowing Edi the opportunity to present her/his own arguments as to why change is needed.

The terrier  **uses persistence (often perceived as criticism)**

The terrier persistently , cajoles, nags and tries to wear out the anorexic minx or the bulimic boa constrictor. The downside of this terrier type behaviour is that either Edi tunes out to what they perceive as irritating white noise, or gives the opportunity for covert negative counteracting behaviours. Caring motives are misunderstood and everyone's morale is sapped. Your loved one loses the inner resource to face the rich tapestry of life without an eating disorder identity. The eating disorder is rather like a terrier constantly criticising your loved one - saying she/he is not good enough, needs to try harder. Role modeling active listening and reflection with compassion and sensitivity directed to the positive will help her/him have the support and encouragement to challenge the eating disorder voice.

Practice praising Edi's efforts rather than the results.

Inspirational Animals

Of all the animals in the animal kingdom, we want you to aspire to be a St Bernard for warmth and compassion in the face of danger and a Dolphin for its wisdom and hands-off form of support.

The dolphin  **Just enough caring and control (behavioural)**

An optimal way of helping someone with an eating disorder is to gently nudge them along. Imagine your loved one is at sea. The eating disorder identity is his/ her life vest. She/he is unwilling to give up the safety of this life vest whilst living in the frozen wasteland of the eating disorder. You are the dolphin, nudging her/him to safety, at times swimming ahead, leading the way, showing them new vistas, at other times swimming alongside with

encouragement, or even quietly swimming behind, showing trust and confidence.



The St Bernard

Just enough compassion and consistency (emotional)

Another optimal caring response is one of calmness, warmth and compassion. This involves accepting and processing the pain resulting from what is lost through the eating disorder and developing reserves of kindness, gentleness and love. The St Bernard instills hope in your loved one that they can change, that there is a future full of possibility beyond the eating disorder. The St. Bernard responds consistently and is unfailing, reliable and dependable in all circumstances. The St. Bernard has a good antennae attuned to the welfare and safety of those who are lost...calm, warm and nurturing.

The herd of elephants

Collaboration is key to the skills we are teaching and so we have added the elephant metaphor. Collaborative care is like being a herd of elephants linking trunks and tails to jointly care for our loved ones. The carer works with a team of wise others to make decisions and provide care. This illustrates the importance of including friends and family and gathering information from books and workshops. This also underlines the importance of working with a wider support network including your GP and specialist care teams.