

National Eating Disorders Association: Guest Blogger Guidelines

Content Guideline Best Practices

As you get started with your writing, please take a look at the list below for techniques and best practices that make for a successful blog post:

- Write a brief, attention-grabbing title that accurately describes the content of the post, tells the audience why they should read the post and is ideally 50-60 characters long. You can use this tool to evaluate the title strength: <https://headlines.sharethrough.com/> and this to brainstorm ideas: <https://www.semrush.com/goodcontent/title-generator/>
- Include relevant or useful images or infographics at the beginning of the post and throughout the body to break up text.
- Make your post scan-able: Write in short sentences and paragraphs (ideally no more than 3 sentences long) and leave white space, so it's easier to read.
- **Bold** and/or *italicize* pertinent points.
- Break information up with subheadings, bullet points, numbered lists, breakout quotes when appropriate.
- Include anchor text with internal links to other relevant NEDA content and/or external links to reputable sources of information and resources.
- Tie in your topic to current affairs, key dates/holidays, recent news headlines, etc.
- Keep blog posts concise but thorough (1,500 - 2,500 words is best).
- Review previous posts on the NEDA blog to generate ideas about how to format and design your post.
- Include actionable steps the audience can take that is relevant to the content.
- Use credible data or real life examples to back up an argument or claim.
- Start and end posts with a question geared toward the reader (i.e., have you ever wondered...?)

[Messaging and Language Protocol](#)

As the largest information clearinghouse about eating disorders and related issues, NEDA is careful to use language that is sensitive to our audience. This means avoiding potential triggers, inadvertently glamorizing the subject or encouraging copycats to experiment with these life-threatening behaviors in your post or in any material you link to from your post.

Sharing Your Story Responsibly

Below is a list of basic guidelines that we ask bloggers to follow when composing their posts:

- ***Don't focus on graphic images or descriptions of the bodies of eating disorder sufferers.*** Research shows that dramatizing dangerous thinness can provoke a "race to the bottom" mentality among other sufferers, i.e., "She is/was thinner than I am and she's still alive. I should lose more weight." Making value judgments about bodies should also be avoided.
- ***Don't reinforce socially-defined appearance ideals.*** Reinforcing the appearance ideal can lead to internalizing and comparison which can increase body dissatisfaction which is a risk factor for developing an eating disorder.
- ***Don't play the numbers game.*** Things like, "She ate only 400 calories a day," "He took as many as ten laxatives at a time" or "I got down to 95 lbs" can turn a well-intentioned post into a recipe for disaster.
- ***Avoid examples of specific eating disordered behaviors.*** Sharing detailed anecdotes of eating disordered behavior can be instructive and/or triggering to vulnerable readers. Avoid statements like "I would eat two boxes of donuts only to throw them up shortly after."
- ***Avoid "black and white" statements about food.*** Eating disorders thrive with "black and white" thinking. Statements that categorize certain foods as "bad/good" or "healthy/unhealthy" can fuel this type of thinking among vulnerable individuals.
- ***Avoid language that perpetuates diet culture.*** Deliberate efforts to diet or restrict food has been identified as a risk factor for the development of eating disorders.

- **Watch out for "anorexia chic."** Eating disorders and their sufferers shouldn't be glamorized or, worse yet, presented as people with "astounding will-power" or "incredible self-control."
- **Be careful with narratives of "bravely fighting the illness alone."** Perhaps you or your subject did, but most don't. The vast majority of those who overcome an eating disorder do it only with the ongoing help of trained mental health and medical professionals.

Sources and Plagiarism

Writers are responsible for the accuracy of outside information and statistics that they choose to include in a blog post. Please include a link when citing another source, so that readers can have access to the source.

To give proper credit to sourced writers, please refrain from copying another person's ideas. Make sure to properly quote sources and include citations in APA format. Finally, your blog post should still be mostly original work; if you find that is not the case, please take the time to revise your post before submitting.

Additional Considerations

In addition, NEDA is a 501(c)3 organization that serves a diverse population and is committed to avoiding any potential conflicts of interest on the NEDA blog. To meet this goal, please consider these additional guidelines when drafting your blog post:

- **Religion.** NEDA strongly acknowledges and supports the right to personal religious beliefs and views and how your faith may have helped you in your recovery process. As a national non-profit that serves and reaches a diverse group of people, we do try to be as non-denominational as possible in order to make content feel like a message that people of all faiths relate to (and we do have to be mindful not to endorse any one specific religious belief or view). When writing about issues of spirituality, please make sure to frame your references to religion as a personal belief.
- **Political Opinion.** NEDA acknowledges and respects the political opinion of each individual. With that said, NEDA asks that you be mindful of how you present opinions within your post. While it is important to acknowledge how policies and legislation may directly impact the NEDA community, we ask that

you avoid taking a political stance or criticizing specific public figures or policies within your post.

- **Treatment Professionals.** NEDA greatly values the contributions and perspectives of the professionals in the field of eating disorders. In order to best serve our constituents, we are careful to avoid indicating preference to any treatment providers or treatment centers. As such, professionals who write for the NEDA blog cannot include in their bios comparative language or calls to action to their private practice or treatment center. Credentials and job titles are acceptable to include in your bio.
- **Giving treatment advice.** NEDA promotes recovery with the help of treatment professionals. We are not able to post medical or treatment advice on our website. Please do not give treatment advice in your blog post. While one treatment method may have been right for you (or your client), it is important to contextualize your experience for the reader.
- **Self-promotion.** Promoting your own blog, book, album, movie, etc. should be avoided when writing for the NEDA blog. However, they will be listed in your short bio at the end of the article and NEDA will include a link.
- **Reviewing books, films, and/or music.** If you would like to review a book, film or album in a NEDA blog post, please get approval from NEDA prior to writing. Per our organizational policy (also applicable to our quarterly newsletter *Making Connections*), books cannot be reviewed by NEDA staff, any individual associated with the project, or those who gain financially from the project.

Approval And Editorial Process

The first step in drafting a post for the NEDA blog is to submit your idea for approval to NEDA. Once the topic is approved and a deadline is agreed upon, your post can be drafted and emailed to NEDA for editing.

We ask that the draft be emailed in Google Doc format along with a brief bio and recent headshot. The bio should be approximately 25 words, including your LinkedIn and Twitter contact info, if available, and the headshot should include your entire head and upper torso, be centered and not closely cropped.

We also ask our blog contributors to record a short video (20 sec-1min/recorded vertically) that would serve as an intro to the blog post, if you are comfortable doing

so. They can tell a little bit about yourself and what you wrote about. We will embed that video in the blog as well as post on social media to promote the blog post.

Prior to publishing the blog, all pieces will be edited for grammar, structure, tone, style, format and more. In addition, they will be reviewed for content by NEDA staff to ensure that they conform to NEDA's policies and include accurate information.

Authors will be made aware of any changes and suggested edits and will have the opportunity to give the final approval of their blog post before posting. Questions about why edits were made are always appreciated and will be explained in more detail upon request.

Once the blog is published we will include a disclaimer at the top of the page stating; "This blog post represents the author's views and should not be interpreted as professional/medical advice or endorsed by NEDA."

If any minor updates need to be made after the blog is published a NEDA staff member will be responsible for those changes.

Notes on Writing from Personal Experience: NEDA asks that you contextualize and share personal experiences in a way that provides insight and educates readers about eating disorders, preferably from a fresh perspective.

Republishing Policy

We encourage you to re-post your NEDA guest blogs to your personal website and social media channels, but ask that you include the text "Originally published on the National Eating Disorders Association's blog" with a link to the post. We will also promote new blog posts via NEDA's social media channels when appropriate.

Questions?

We are always available to answer any questions and provide support to our bloggers. Please feel free to contact Lynx Mchea at lmchea@nationaleatingdisorders.org with any questions/concerns/comments/ etc.