

Milestones of Recovery in EDA v1.2

In EDA, we recognize what we call “milestones of recovery.” What is recovery? What are milestones?

Recovery

In recovery we face our pain and fear without obsessing on food, weight and body image. This does not mean we never have food, weight or body image issues. It merely means we take it in stride when we do. Recovery means developing healthy perspectives, knowing we will do better some days than others, knowing we will never be perfect at anything including recovery, and knowing recovery is not freedom from trouble and pain but freedom from getting stuck in feelings of uselessness and self-pity.

We binged, starved, purged and obsessed in an effort to manage unwelcome emotions. The solution to an eating disorder has to do with accepting our thoughts and feelings, and finding safe and responsible ways to express them. There is no magic about recovery. When we take responsibility for understanding our needs and getting them met, we walk free. It sounds so simple, but it is hard work, especially at first.

Recovery means rebuilding trust with ourselves and others, taking careful risks to learn what is safe and good for us. As we practice careful self-honesty and self-disclosure we regain perspective. Perspective enables us to see our options and make careful, responsible choices in our lives. As we learn careful self-expression, we regain lost authenticity, peace and power. The process is usually gradual and halting. New attitudes and behaviors are alien, and it is hard to feel safe and keep perspective. It is hard to remember we are aiming for balance, not perfection. It is very important for us to claim our successes in achieving balance and attaining perspective, in identifying our needs and in developing more resilient relationships with ourselves, with others and with food. This is just where “milestones of recovery” come in.

Milestones

A “milestone of recovery” is a self-defined marker on our journey in recovery. It is essential to recognize that even on our worst days we do things that are right and good and supportive of our recovery. Milestones -- which take myriad and often surprising forms -- are bright spots in our meetings that inspire us with their honesty and reality. We find, often in retrospect, that our milestones express how we are working the principles of the program in our lives. The principles -- embodied in the 12 Steps of EDA -- include Honesty, Equality, Accountability, Love, Trust and Humility (Health: the EDA motto). We claim as many milestones as we can!

Examples

“I ate pizza last night for the first time in three years and it was great!”

“I took responsibility and let go of one of my boyfriends.”

“I refused to let my wife tell me what to think about this issue.”

“I’m looking at how miserable I am, and I need to know what I’m getting from staying stuck. Maybe if I know what works about it, I can make a different plan to get those needs met.”

“I thought about what might make me happy and decided to take dance lessons.”

“I forgave my friend for disappointing me. I felt very mature about that.”

“Ugh! I’m obsessing again, but at least I know it, and I’m being open about it.”

“I finally weaned myself off laxatives. It’s been twelve years since I’ve gone without them for this long!”

“I was feeling very hurt and rejected, and I said so calmly without expecting any particular response.”

“My need for security always seems to conflict with my need for self-expression. It makes me mad and I want to escape! But I realized I’ll never be safe until I allow myself to have and express ugly thoughts.”

“I screamed what I was thinking on paper, and then I found I could talk about it calmly without blaming.”

“I wanted to run and hide by being really busy, but I sat down and asked myself what I was afraid of. I made a new plan. My fears evaporated, and I felt terrific!”

“I was sad yesterday and I just let myself be sad.”

“I almost ate something I hate because I didn’t want to look eating disordered, but then I decided I care more about what I think than about what they think of me.”