

Additional Suggestions for Recovery

Self-care

- Treat yourself well. We are selfish until we get our own needs met.
- Eat when hungry and stop when moderately full. This sometimes requires enormous persistence and faith to learn and practice, but self-trust and wholeness depend upon it. Consistent nutrition is essential for recovery.
- Eat “real” food. Deprivation never helps. EDA endorses sound nutrition and discourages rigidity around food, weight, body image, and exercise.
- Safety is job one. Make a daily plan to get adequate sleep, nutrition, emotional support, and financial stability. Do the best you can and adapt to what is. Recovery is flexible.
- Make a self-soothing or self-care plan and stick to it.
- Find positive things to say to yourself and others every day but do not say anything you do not really mean.
- Try to maintain a sense of humor.
- Make use of daily meditation literature. Even five minutes in the morning or evening can set the tone for the day and help us keep focused on recovery and solutions.
- Keep a gratitude journal. Write in it each night and focus on what’s working.
- “Lean on God and walk with people.” That is, do not lean too heavily on people. We all let people down sometimes. It doesn’t work to expect others to sustain us emotionally or financially. Dependence on a Higher Power / higher purpose means independence from unhealthy emotional and financial attachments to other people.
- Be gentle with yourself. Treat and talk to yourself as you would to your best friend or a loved one. Practice compassion with yourself and you will be more likely to compassionate with others.

Moving through Difficult Emotions

- When angry, ask yourself, “What would help me feel heard and validated?” and do it. (Ex: angry journaling, writing an angry letter [don’t send], smacking a wet towel against the bathtub, drumming, painting, talking about what is making you angry to someone who won’t be threatened, saying “I am angry. It’s okay to be angry. I will not hurt anyone. I will learn how to handle being angry safely.”)
- Feeling stuck? Make deliberate, careful changes. Doing the same things and expecting different outcomes doesn’t work. What am I willing to change right now?
- Find safe ways to vent emotions. The point of meetings is to vent emotions and practice recovery tools so we can do life outside of meetings. If we don’t have alternatives to eating disordered behavior, we will get stuck. If we don’t vent emotions safely our eating disorders will get worse.
- Fear of being real is why we have an eating disorder. The solution is to be real and accept the consequences. Not “being real” does not mean we escape consequences! Am I sick and tired of getting the same old results? What am I willing to do differently right now?
- When anxious, do something to “get inside your body”. Do something to notice the power of your body. Moving into a different room or going outside can have the desired effect.
- Confront ill attitudes and behaviors in yourself.
- Live and let live. Don’t worry too much about the wrongs of others. Make sure you are living as happily as you can.
- Easy does it. Don’t make a bigger deal out of things than they have to be. Get a sustainable perspective.
- Feelings are neither right nor wrong. They just are.
- We have a right to our feelings. Handling them in a safe and responsible manner makes the world a safe place. This usually takes much training, practice, and patience. It is important to understand which situations cause “problematic” emotions and to make a plan to handle ourselves in those situations. Addressing issues head-on really works.

Building Resilience

- Trust and rely on yourself. A Higher Power is “an unsuspected inner resource” for most, according to *Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition*, pages 569-570.
- A failed internal protector becomes an internal prosecutor. What can I say to myself to rebuild my internal protector? We are what we practice!
- Recovery is about feelings, not food, but we can’t reason or build trust when bingeing, purging, or starving.
- “When I focus on the problem, the problem seems to get bigger. When I focus on solutions, they get more powerful. What might be a solution I am willing to try right now?”
- “I am not making much sense. Is it possible that I am malnourished or overtired? Am I hungry, angry, lonely, tired or in shame? I ought to deal with those first.”
- “My serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations. How have my expectations set me up for disappointment and frustration? Am I willing to change my expectations?”
- When feeling “crappy” or uncomfortable, ask yourself, “What would I be doing if I were feeling better?” then do one of those things.
- When scared, notice the power of your body, mind, and spirit and then ask, “What risk-taking behaviors build self-trust?” and do one. (Ex: talk to someone about what is scaring you, drop “more important” things to get perspective).
- Validate feelings, challenge old thinking, and change old behaviors.
- Afraid of rejection? Plan how to comfort yourself when you get it: “It’s effort, not results that count.” “I took a risk and did the right thing.” “It’s not about me.” “I just did something hard and I can be proud of that.” “I am worthy, and it is all right if not everyone thinks so.” “I will try again with someone else.” “I can talk to others about this.”

These suggestions were compiled by people in recovery from an eating disorder.

Please take what you can use and leave the rest.

Maintaining a Recovery Focus

- To live happily (and be a valuable member of society), show up, tell the truth, do the work, and let go of the outcomes.
- Be an adult. Ask yourself “What would a rational adult do in this situation?” If you are not sure what to do, pray and/or call others and talk about it. That’s what a rational adult would do!
- Please remember we all need training and practice to be effective adults. Be gentle with yourself.
- Act, don’t react.
- Keep a recovery focus.
- Talk about your own issues rather than just providing feedback to others.
- Don’t blame others. It does not help to let ourselves continue as victims.
- There is no one thing, no magic bullet, which will make you better. But you will get better if you keep being honest, keep an open mind, and keep being willing to change your mind and behavior.
- First things first. That is, focus on what is most important and address that issue first—one thing at a time, and keep doing the next right thing.
- Ask for others’ input and make your own decisions.
- Make a list of what your eating disorder does for you (i.e. comfort, catharsis, escape, adrenaline rush, sense of power or mastery) and come up with alternatives that deliver the same result (i.e. remove self from situation, identify discomfort, validate feelings, write/call/scream/music/walk etc., and act from a safe plan).
- Remember the process of recovery feels raw and miserable a good bit of the time at first, but it is worth it. In the end, there is real recovery (peace, freedom, and usefulness) and hard work to be proud of. We grow and that feels good, right, and happy.
- Making a mistake does not mean, “going back to square one.” Acknowledge mistakes, try to understand what went wrong and why, plan for how to handle things differently to get a better outcome, then let go and move forward.
- Get willing to do whatever it takes to not engage in the eating disorder. Practically no one can stop the cycle and develop alternatives without that commitment. Be persistent. Commitment, like anything else, must be practiced to be effective.
- Develop willingness to look at things differently.
- Recovery is a process, not an event.

- Show up for life no matter what.
- Try to maintain a sense of humor.
- Focus on the solutions to your issues. Don’t worry about other people’s issues.
- Aim for progress, not perfection.
- Talk about your mistakes and what you want to do differently the next time.

Getting Involved (Service)

- Get involved. Helping others is a great way to build recovery. “The meaning of life is to give life meaning.”
- Reach out to newcomers.
- Get on the phone list. Call people.
- Go to EDA 12-Step meetings, read the literature and work the Steps with a sponsor. Others’ experience, strength, and hope can transform and strengthen our own recovery.
- Trust God as you understand God. Take responsibility for yourself and serve others.
- Help others. Ask somebody to the movies or coffee. Listen as you want others to listen to you.

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(Please read our brochure,
“Recovery Tools,” first!)

For more information please visit
our website at:

www.4EDA.org

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