

For the Newcomer

Welcome to EDA

Eating Disorders Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover from their eating disorders. The only requirement for EDA membership is a desire to recover from an eating disorder.

History of EDA

In the 1930's the Twelve Step Program Alcoholics Anonymous was established, resulting in new hope for previously hopeless alcoholics. This Twelve Step model has proven effective for many other problems. In 2000, sober members of AA created EDA to address their eating disorders. They realized that an abstinence-based model did not work to resolve their eating disorders and knew something different was needed. The EDA program focuses on balance rather than abstinence as a goal. We know we will have our eating disorders until we no longer need them, and there is not much point in shaming ourselves as we gradually build up skills and confidence in addressing life's challenges differently. Balance continues to be a useful goal in all we do.

If you are uncertain whether or not you belong in EDA, see the quiz in the brochure, [Could You Be One of Us?](#)

What is EDA's Solution?

Issues with food, weight, body image, or exercise are a sign that we lack effective coping skills. We see eating disordered behaviors as damaging attempts to manage our emotions and difficult situations. As we learn to address our difficulties using more effective coping skills, our eating disorder symptoms tend to fade away. In our experience, full recovery from an eating disorder is possible for everyone, but it takes time and effort to learn to respond differently. EDA provides members with coping skills in the form of the Twelve Steps and recovery tools. See the brochure, [EDA Recovery Tools](#). Additionally, EDA emphasizes that taking care of our own basic needs is foundational for recovery from an eating disorder.

Four Important Tools of EDA

- **Steps** The Twelve Steps of the EDA program of recovery are the “main tool” we use to establish a foundation for recovery from our eating disorders. These Steps are listed on the back of this brochure. If you are an atheist or agnostic, please be assured that believers and non-believers alike can and do recover. EDA encourages members to identify a higher purpose from which to draw strength if reliance on God or a Higher Power seems impractical or impossible. You can begin to work the Steps at any time, but usually new members begin formally working the Twelve Steps after getting an EDA sponsor.

- **Sponsorship** EDA encourages members – when they feel ready to do so – to ask someone who has worked the Twelve Steps of EDA to help them do the same: a sponsor. Sponsors in EDA have worked the Twelve Steps in EDA and share their experience, strength and hope with sponsees. Please see the brochure [Sponsorship In EDA](#) for more information.

- **Literature** The EDA website's Literature tab has lots of helpful, free material: Please explore. EDA's “main text” (aka the “EDA Big Book”) is titled, *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. You can purchase it from online book sellers. The first part of the book describes the recovery process. The second part includes many personal stories of recovery. EDA members may download the EDA Big Book at no cost from the EDA website. You can also find an audio version of the EDA Big Book, brochures and recordings, including recordings of workshops at www.4EDA.org

- **Meetings** There is a [Meetings](#) tab on the EDA website where you can find a listing of EDA meetings. We go to meetings to support and learn from each other, and to enjoy fellowship. We soon realize we are not alone.

At meetings, we often exchange phone numbers. Informal sharing during phone calls builds important relationships. It is wise to reach out between meetings to get to know other recovering members.

If there are no meetings near where you live, do not be discouraged. Many of us attend EDA meetings on Zoom or an online chat room.

Most EDA meetings are open to everyone. There are some EDA meetings offered for specific groups (i.e., for men, for women, LBGQT, People of Color). Some meetings are open only to EDA members. (The only requirement for EDA membership is a desire to recover from an eating disorder.) EDA meetings are listed on the [Meetings](#) tab of the EDA website. Some meetings focus on study of EDA literature while others are topic oriented. Try lots of meetings to find ones you like.

Many cities have in-person meetings. We suggest you check with a meeting's contact person before traveling to any in-person meeting to ensure it is up and running.

Most meetings ask participants to avoid mentioning certain things (usually specific foods, food plans, and numbers) to keep the meeting calm and focused on recovery for those who are struggling; recovery from the underlying causes of an eating disorder has nothing to do with specific foods, food plans, or numbers.

Most meetings offer a chance for newcomers to introduce themselves. EDA members introduce themselves in many different ways, which you will see modeled at meetings. You can decide for yourself how to introduce yourself. All that is required is your first name.

Many EDA meetings include sharing of milestones. Milestones are brief shares about something positive you did that supported or expressed your recovery. By noticing and sharing our milestones at meetings, we affirm our progress and inspire one another.

Anonymity is an important concept in EDA. It is part of our name! One aspect of anonymity is that we don't tell others who we see at meetings or what others shared at meetings. Also, if we see someone from EDA outside of a meeting, we do not say anything that would let others know where we met.

Taking Care of Our Basic Needs

We take care of our basic needs by recognizing that we have them, accepting that it is our responsibility to differentiate between our needs and our desires, and to work toward getting our basic needs met. EDA advises us to begin our recovery by working on getting our basic needs met **first**. This means: If hungry, eat. If angry, find a safe outlet. If lonely, reach out. If tired, sleep. If ashamed, talk about it. When anxious or troubled, do something that focuses attention on your physical senses, get outside, pray, or meditate.

In EDA, we focus on balance. Appendix B in the EDA Big Book provides a bit of background and examples of what balance looks like in practice. Focusing on basic needs brings us a long way toward achieving balance in our lives. To learn more, there is a brochure titled, [Recovery, Milestones, and Balance](#) on the EDA website's [Literature](#) tab.

Is There a Food Plan?

There are no food plans in EDA. EDA endorses sound nutrition and discourages any form of rigidity around food. EDA also acknowledges the role of consistent nutrition for recovery. Food is nourishment for mind, soul, and body. Balance – not abstinence – is our goal. We encourage anyone looking specifically for a food plan to work with experienced and credentialed professionals, such as registered dietitians who are trained to work with eating disordered clients.

How Long Does Recovery Take?

If you think you may have an eating disorder or have been diagnosed with one, you may think recovery is not possible. Many of us felt the same way, yet our experience is that recovery is accessible to anyone. Recovery requires willingness to be uncomfortable at times as we gradually adopt new ways of thinking and acting in response to life's challenges.

We did not develop our eating disordered patterns overnight and they do not go away overnight. It is our experience that recovery is a process not an event. A resilient recovery is achievable if we do the work.

“Day by day, as they work the Steps, newcomers in EDA find their eating disorders weakening: the stranglehold gradually loosens. Our recovery grows with our increasing reliance on ideas that hold more power to provide peace and perspective than our eating disorders ever did.”¹

THE TWELVE STEPS OF EDA

1. We admitted we were powerless over our eating disorders – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
2. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others with eating disorders, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

¹ *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. (2016) Carlsbad, CA: Gürze Books, 79.

For the Newcomer



For more information please visit
our website at:

www.4EDA.org

July 2022