

## What is an Eating Disorder?

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Eating disorders have been characterized by “a persistent disturbance of eating or eating-related behavior that results in the altered consumption or absorption of food and that significantly impairs physical health or psychosocial functioning” according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5. You can learn more about specific diagnoses in our ‘Big Book,’ *Eating Disorders Anonymous*, Chapter 3 (More on Eating Disorders) at [www.4EDA.org](http://www.4EDA.org)

## What is EDA?

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Eating Disorders Anonymous (EDA) 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 membership is a desire to recover from an eating disorder.

Our primary purpose is to recover from our eating disorders and to carry this message of recovery to others with eating disorders.

## How can I help my loved one who is seeking recovery through EDA?

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EDA is a program that requires time to change. As we say, ‘recovery is a process not an event’. It is hard work. Providing your loved one with understanding that they are working hard to change their thinking and behavior can be very beneficial. Our members typically attend meetings and meet with a sponsor, someone who leads them through the twelve steps, on a weekly basis. This means your loved one will need to spend time away from you to work on their recovery. These actions are meant to help their recovery process and not take them away from you.

Another suggestion we have to offer is asking your loved one what they need to feel supported on their journey. Each individual is different and certain things that are supportive for one person may be harmful to another.

## How can I help my loved one who is NOT seeking recovery?

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Watching someone struggle with an eating disorder can be upsetting. You may have done any of the following with your loved one to try and help them:

- Asked them to seek recovery for themselves or for you
- Pleaded with them or even gotten them to go to treatment, therapy, or other eating disorder groups
- Worried about their wellbeing at the expense of your own
- Made special meals for them because they wouldn’t eat certain foods
- Hid food that you knew they binged on
- Listened carefully after a meal to hear if they purged
- Wondered when or if they would/could get better

No matter whether you have all or none of the above, if you are reading this brochure we know you have care and concern for your loved one; they are lucky to have someone who cares about them. EDA members help one another apply principles and approaches that support recovery, however, EDA is not the only path to recovery. If your loved one does not know about EDA you can tell them about our program by giving them one of our brochures or a copy of the EDA Big Book. Your loved one’s recovery, however, is up to them to seek and work towards.

## **Principles to help you regardless of your loved one's recovery status**

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### Detachment

"Detachment" can be a difficult word to read when we want so desperately for our loved one to live a life free of an eating disorder. Detachment does not mean we lose our love for a person. Instead detachment allows us to see that our loved one is responsible for their own life. Detachment helps us let go of the outcome. Detachment means loving the person and not the behavior. We practice detachment by reflecting on positive advances our loved one is making in being responsible for themselves. Being grateful for what is going right and focusing on the next right thing for ourselves helps us let go of shame and guilt.

### Acceptance

If you have tried to get your loved one into recovery then you may feel frustration, despair, and hopelessness. Acceptance helps us see we cannot force anyone into recovery. Acceptance doesn't mean cosigning the behavior. We can practice acceptance by setting boundaries with our loved ones regarding their behaviors and allowing them to make their own decisions about recovery.

## **Is there a program like Al Anon for those whose loved ones have eating disorders?**

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Al Anon is a Twelve-Step program for family and friends of those with a drinking problem. Currently there is no version of that for EDA. If you are interested in starting a program like Al Anon but for people who have loved ones experiencing an eating disorder, please email [info@eatingdisordersanonymous.org](mailto:info@eatingdisordersanonymous.org). We will connect you with others interested in starting a program.

### **How to Find EDA**

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Look for meetings, publications and more  
at:

[www.4EDA.org](http://www.4EDA.org)

You may also email us at:

[info@eatingdisordersanonymous.org](mailto:info@eatingdisordersanonymous.org)

Or write to us at:

**Eating Disorders Anonymous**

**PO Box 55876**

**Phoenix, AZ 85078-5876**

## *To Family and Friends of Loved Ones with Eating Disorders*



For more information please visit  
our website at:

[www.4EDA.org](http://www.4EDA.org)

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