

Eating Disorders Anonymous FAQ for Healthcare Providers

revised 6/20/23

What is Eating Disorders Anonymous (EDA)?

EDA is a supportive Twelve-Step fellowship for individuals with eating disorders who desire to recover. While EDA has deep roots in the Twelve-Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), recovery from an eating disorder is not identical to recovery from alcoholism. The EDA program has been adapted from the AA program to meet the needs of those with eating disorders. EDA recognizes and respects that eating disordered thinking and behaviors are often deeply engrained coping mechanisms that temporarily relieve the pain of chaotic, intense and/or unwelcome feelings and ideas. EDA emphasizes that “it’s not about the food,” and provides tools and processes to help members work through these issues with dignity and sensitivity. EDA encourages focusing on seeking *balance* in all areas of life.

Are there “sponsors” in EDA?

Yes. An EDA sponsor is a member who has experienced recovery by working the EDA program, typically under the guidance of their sponsor, and now offers to mentor others through this process.

How is EDA different from AA ,and other 12-Step groups for persons with eating issues?

- EDA is not an abstinence-based program and does **not** endorse the idea that food itself is “addictive”. No food or food groups are addictive.
- EDA endorses sound nutrition and discourages any form of rigidity around food. EDA discourages weighing or measuring anything including body weight, food, and length of recovery (i.e., days, years, etc.).
- When assistance with food or eating concerns is needed, consultation with a doctor or dietician (ideally with a specialty in eating disorders) is encouraged. For many, the path to recovery involves utilizing a professional support team which can include medical, nutritional, psychiatric, and psychological support.
- EDA refers to recovery as a process, not an event. Return to eating disorder behaviors is not seen as a crisis but rather as an opportunity to learn and grow.
- EDA experience is that *full recovery is achievable*. Full recovery is seen as the natural outcome of engaging in the work of recovery.
- EDA fully supports those who embrace an organized religion, as well as those seeking a less traditional approach to spirituality. In addition, EDA’s way of working the 12 Steps includes a path specifically for atheists and agnostics.
- In EDA, each member, including new members, have equal status. Each member has strengths to offer to the group and to their peers.

Can I attend an EDA meeting?

Most EDA meetings are open to those seeking more information about EDA. Some EDA groups are “Closed” except to people seeking recovery from their own eating disorder. These are identified as “Closed” on the meeting listing available on EDA’s website, www.4EDA.org.

Would EDA be a good fit for my patient/client?

We believe EDA can be a fit for most individuals with eating disorders, including those who don't conform to common eating disorder diagnostic categories. EDA is intended to support individuals with any type of problem with food, eating, exercise, or body image, whether mild, moderate or severe. EDA welcomes individuals from all ethnicities, levels of socio-economic status, backgrounds, beliefs (or lack thereof), gender identity, and sexual orientation. EDA is less appropriate for prepubescent clients, though they may attend open meetings with a parent or guardian.

How can EDA support my patient's recovery?

EDA can complement professional treatment by providing additional support:

- **Emotion regulation:** The importance of meeting one's own basic needs is emphasized early and often in EDA. EDA provides numerous tools and resources to help members engage in a variety of emotion regulation techniques ranging from self-soothing to problem solving.
- **Motivation:** EDA fosters motivation in a variety of ways.
 - *Social influence:* EDA members relate to each other's experiences, reducing feelings of isolation. Healthy coping techniques are modeled and discussed.
 - *Hope:* Witnessing the positive changes in other members provides hope and is especially beneficial for those questioning if recovery is possible for them. EDA affirms that full recovery is possible and worth the investment of time and effort.
 - *Service:* There are many opportunities to do service within the EDA program. Service provides a sense of community, purpose, usefulness, and self-esteem.
- **Social support/fellowship:** EDA provides a social support network. Members are encouraged to attend EDA meetings and to reach out to one another for support between meetings.
- **Interpersonal skill-building:** EDA provides opportunities to practice interpersonal skills such as asking for help, leadership, appropriate self-disclosure, assertiveness, and healthy communication.
- **Spirituality:** Many EDA members find their existing spirituality is enhanced by working EDA's steps. Others have adopted EDA principals and tools as their spiritual path.
- **Self-awareness:** EDA gives members opportunities to learn more about themselves through sharing with peers, working the steps, reading EDA literature, and using various introspective tools.

May I facilitate an EDA meeting at my office or clinic?

EDA meetings must be run by EDA members. You can provide a location for an EDA meeting if the meeting is run by EDA members and follows EDA guidelines.

How can I learn more?

All EDA literature and audio material are available at no cost on the EDA website, www.4EDA.org. There are many EDA meetings each day both in-person and virtual. These are listed on the "Meetings" tab on the EDA website. Feel free to contact us at info@eatingdisordersanonymous.org if we can be of any assistance.