Reflections on Recovery
from EDA Members

This initial draft contains 120 reflections; more will be added soon!

EDA members are encouraged to submit original meditations for consideration at the link below:
https://eatingdisordersanonymous.org/literature/meditations/.

We welcome your feedback!

Please include the submission number (in small print at the bottom of each daily reading). Send comments to: Literature@eatingdisordersanonymous.org.
Reflections on Recovery

Dear Reader,

The following collection of reflections from members of Eating Disorders Anonymous (EDA) is intended to help you feel companionship and support from others as we each navigate the stream of life.

In our experience, it takes involvement in our communities to make the journey of life rewarding and fun—communities where we laugh together, support each other through difficulties, delight in each other’s successes, and help each other achieve common goals. There is joy in shared experiences, even when some of these are challenging. We invite you to join us.

The meditations in this sample reflect the diversity of life experiences among EDA members in recovery. We have differing positions on faith, various approaches to navigating our lives in relation to others, and a diversity of ways of being in the world. The voices you hear in this book are like those of a friend: the ideas and reflections may not fully match your own. No one expects that your ideas will line up perfectly! We want everyone to honor their own truth. In EDA, the word God can refer to the Deity, a deity, a spiritual entity (a Higher Power of one’s own understanding), or a non-spiritual source of peace and power, such as a higher purpose—whatever helps us find a sane and healthy perspective. Please take what you can use and leave the rest.

The following selections highlight some of the core ideas we think are most critical to recovery from an eating disorder.

These core concepts include:

• **Taking care of our basic needs**—we are the only ones who can!
• Celebrating **milestones, not numbers** (noticing what we are doing right)—changing our negative self-talk into acceptance and compassion through acknowledging the many positive efforts we make each day.

• Focusing on **balance (not abstinence)**.

• Recognizing that **recovery is about feelings, not food**, weight, exercise, or body image.

• Understanding that **recovery is not rigid**.

• Learning that **full recovery** is possible.

• Living by the principles reflected in the EDA Motto: **HEALTH** (honesty, equality, accountability, love, trust, and humility).

• Respecting that a **desire to recover is the only requirement** for EDA membership.

• Affirming that the heart of the Twelve Steps is a spiritual solution, yet anyone (including atheists and agnostics) can work the Steps through **reliance on something greater than themselves** (such a higher purpose).

• **Sponsoring others** as part of EDA’s 12th Step.

• Supporting one another by **sharing experience, strength, and hope**—fellowship inside and outside of meetings.

• Reading EDA literature.

• Expressing **gratitude** for whatever life presents to us, such as noticing what others are doing right; this practice helps us replace negative thinking with more appreciative and positive thoughts.

• **Maintaining anonymity (i.e., safety)** for ourselves and others.
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We would like to elaborate on some of the above-listed components to provide further insight into the recovery process:

- **Taking care of basic needs.**
  
  o After we begin to engage in listening to and addressing our basic needs (as listed below)—distinguishing these from wants and desires—many of us are astonished that we are no longer engulfed by deep, unmet needs as we might have once feared. Our confidence in our minds and bodies grows stronger as we gradually realize that our bodies can be trusted to tell us what they need. We begin to trust that we will address our emotional needs as well. We build that trust slowly, by taking small risks and paying attention to the results. But what do we mean by “basic needs”? Basic needs have physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and purpose-related dimensions. Simply put:

  - If hungry, we eat.
  - If angry, we find a safe outlet.
  - If lonely, we reach out.
  - If tired, we rest or sleep.
  - If ashamed, we talk about it.
  - If feeling other strong emotions, we talk or write about them to get perspective.
  - When anxious or troubled, we focus our attention on our physical senses, get outside, pray, meditate, or do service—anything that helps remind us of the bigger picture. Once calmer, we deal with the problem as soon as appropriate, bringing as much courage, humility, and humor as possible.
• Once we have taken care of our basic needs, we can turn our attention to what really matters in the greater context of our lives—whatever that may mean to us individually.

- Celebrating **milestones, not numbers**—reminds us that we do much good each day that supports our recovery and benefits others. We address our errors and shortcomings while continuing to celebrate what is going right.

- Milestones can come in many forms, including but not limited to: making the decision to reach out; attending an EDA meeting; sharing personal experiences of hope; working with a sponsor; taking small risks with support to change behaviors; reconnecting with hobbies and passions; or beginning a character-building activity (as outlined in Step Seven of the EDA Big Book). These milestones mark significant achievements and progress in our journeys, highlighting commitment to change, willingness to seek support, and taking steps to increase reliance on our Higher Power/higher purpose.

- Focusing on what we are doing right—our positive actions and growth—fundamentally changes our perspective and builds self-esteem. It reduces the obsession with food, weight, and body image, and helps us remember that it is our efforts—not outcomes—that matter.

- Claiming our milestones helps us recognize the many incremental changes we make along the way and corrects the habit of ruminating on our negative experiences.
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- Celebrating one another’s milestones helps us see that it is the small things we think and do differently that make all the difference.
- We don’t count calories, weight, amount of exercise, or anything else of that sort because focusing on numbers is a distraction from addressing our underlying emotional issues. Instead, we call attention to the numerous ways we can be of cheerful service and doing the next right thing.
- Recovery status is not associated with body size in EDA. Body size is an outside issue, not a topic for discussion in EDA meetings.
- We don’t officially recognize days, weeks, months, or years of recovery and we do not give chips or tokens for lengths of time in recovery. One reason is to avoid comparing ourselves to others in any manner as this can be a part of our eating disordered thinking. Another reason is to prevent shame. It takes time to become proficient in practices that support recovery. We do not want anyone to feel embarrassed about their missteps. Instead, we practice humility and accountability and admit our errors. We refrain from judging anyone, including ourselves. It is important that everyone feels safe being honest about their recovery journey.
- EDA members who no longer engage in eating disordered thoughts or behaviors even under duress sometimes choose to identify as fully recovered because it can generate hope. For this reason, EDA members sometimes mention the length of time since their last use of an eating disorder behavior when sharing their
individual stories at the group level, but length of “time” is never officially celebrated in EDA.

- Focusing on balance—not abstinence—helps us address underlying issues without shame.
  - Our continuous effort to find and retain balance (sanity) through life’s ups and downs leads incrementally to full recovery. The quest to find and retain balance is a lifelong, humble exercise that gives our lives meaning and humor.
  - An “abstinence is recovery” mindset can be rigid, perfectionistic, or uncompromising. It often increases shame and anxiety when what we need most is a calm perspective and deliberate action. We do better when we view a return to eating disordered behaviors as a valuable opportunity for learning and growth. In EDA we do not fear “losing abstinence.” We know we will have our eating disorders until we no longer need them. Our job in EDA is to build trust and resilience through making incremental changes as we work the Steps to create and maintain a calm and balanced perspective.
  - Focusing on balance allows us to see that rigid, all-or-nothing thinking is a symptom of excessive fear. Rigidity in thought and behavior are typically signs of an eating disorder, not usually part of the solution to one. We need not fear our minds or our bodies if we focus on balance and do the next right thing. We aim to keep things simple: we do first things first, one thing at a time.
  - EDA’s focus on balance means we avoid references to yardsticks of “abstinence” that draw attention away from what we really want: sanity. Therefore, we do not
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mention numbers of any kind. Numbers are a distraction, not a part of the solution.

- A focus on balance frees us to strive for what we truly need and enables us to tolerate what used to “trigger” us. We learn to be unafraid of ourselves and our eating disorders.

- Recognizing that recovery is about **feelings, not food.**
  - An eating disorder (the problem) is not about food, weight, body image, or exercise; neither is the solution. **We cannot resolve a problem by focusing on symptoms.** Instead, we investigate and address root causes by working the Twelve Steps. Often we find our root causes have to do with how we think about ourselves in relation to others, God, our Higher Power, and/or higher purpose. We outline possible resolutions and do our best to work through these in daily living. Changing the way we think is a slow process, not an event.
  - Full recovery is not about exerting control, but about full acceptance of our feelings, and full recognition of our ability—and responsibility—to do something useful with them. We cannot simply “cage the tiger and let it out three times a day to eat.” We are the tiger. Caging ourselves does not allow us to live in peace and freedom. We use our feelings to motivate us to make changes in ourselves and/or our circumstances. We celebrate the joy and love that come from doing what is right for ourselves and others.
• Understanding that **recovery is not rigid.**
  
  o Rigidity in almost any area of our lives can be more detrimental than helpful. Seeing the humor in life’s challenges and our response to them helps us maintain balance. A well-developed sense of humor reflects a healthy perspective.
  
  o Recovery from an eating disorder means becoming more flexible and resilient in all areas of life. EDA provides direction and support that can enable us to reach beyond our rigidity and fears toward a fuller and happier life. Unless there is an underlying medical condition, we need not avoid any ingredient or food. Unless there is a threat to safety, we need not avoid any person, place, or thing. We can engage in the world with confidence that we can handle ourselves successfully, no matter the circumstances, and regardless of what anyone else does or says.
  
  o A flexible response to life requires reliance on something greater than ourselves for perspective. Without this, we are likely to be sucked into the undertow of self-centered drama and fear.
  
  o We need to become comfortable with being uncomfortable at times. We try different ways of thinking (leveraging Steps and other recovery tools) until we can move forward with dignity and integrity.
  
  o In recovery, we can change plans, and change our minds, as we see fit. We need not apologize for changing our minds if doing so is consistent with our aim to make things better regardless of what others may think.
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- We are not rigid about the pace of recovery. We may feel unsettled when old patterns resurface. Our next step is to consider what is giving rise to our discomfort and do what we must to restore perspective and find balance. We embrace progress, not perfection. We do not compare our progress to anyone else’s recovery, and accept the pace with which we are addressing our issues and making healthy changes.

- We accept life as it comes and adapt ourselves as we think best serves God’s will, our Higher Power, or higher purpose. We cease fighting anyone directly, even ourselves. Instead, we stand up—on the firing line of life—for what we think matters.

- Learning that full recovery is possible.
  - Though most of us never thought it possible for ourselves, many of us are fully recovered, which means we are free of recurring preoccupations with food, weight, body image, or exercise.
  - We know that freedom from an eating disorder is a byproduct of doing the work to gain perspective, build trust, and maintain balance.
  - We acknowledge that it often takes time and effort to build enough resilience and trust (in ourselves and our God/Higher Power/higher purpose) to be completely free of our eating disorders. With this trust, we develop recoveries that are durable and resilient—not vulnerable to mental blank spots or “triggers.” We don’t live in fear of ourselves or our eating disorders.
- *Full reliance* on God/Higher Power/higher purpose brings perspective and peace and makes *full recovery* possible.

We hope you will take inspiration from the selected meditations to craft your own reflections and share them with us to support the development of a full 365-page book.

You may submit a meditation at [https://eatingdisordersanonymous.org/literature/meditations/](https://eatingdisordersanonymous.org/literature/meditations/).

We wish you much joy and strength as we journey together.

Sincerely,

The meditations committee of the General Service Board of EDA
Reflections on Recovery

January 1

“Step One: We admitted we were powerless over our eating disorders—that our lives had become unmanageable.”  
*EDA Big Book*, p. 113

Initially, I misunderstood Step One, fearing it meant that I had no personal agency—no ability to change my life. Now I see that Step One means accepting that what I was doing—obsessing on weight and body image—wasn’t working. That’s because you can’t cure a disease by focusing on its symptoms! Instead, the more I obsessed, the more out of balance the rest of my life became.

While I truly am powerless over my eating disorder, I do still have personal agency. When an eating disorder thought or behavior bubbles up, I can choose to turn my attention to the solution offered by the rest of the Twelve Steps. I can focus on a Higher Power or higher purpose that I trust (Steps Two and Three), and I can address my issues (Steps Four through Nine).

Step One also means that I don’t have sufficient power to recover all on my own. Today I see this as a blessing, because it motivates me to get to a meeting, reach out to others, and do service.

*I am powerless over symptoms, but I have a solution for my eating disorder’s root causes in the Twelve Steps.*
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January 2

“Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon EDA unity.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 486

I used to be offended by the idea that EDA unity ought to come before my own recovery. Why would anyone invest in an idea before they got anything out of it? I changed my thinking about this, and here is why.

I came to EDA believing that an eating disorder was a permanent state, but seeing and hearing members in full recovery talk about how they got free of their eating disorders enabled me to accept the idea that I could be free, too. If those EDA members hadn’t been unified about how we recover, I wouldn’t have understood this program’s key ideas, which are different from other Twelve-Step fellowships.

In particular, I learned that in EDA, recovery is about balance, not abstinence, and about flexibility, not rigidity. I discovered I’ve got to take care of my own basic needs or I’m like a sad, angry toddler inside my mind. I accepted that focusing on sanity, root issues, and milestones makes more sense than obsessing over food, weight, and emotional drama.

*May I keep the EDA message simple and clear for the welfare of the EDA program, which helps me find true peace and freedom.*

Submission 374
Reflections on Recovery

January 3

“We are **honest** and kind. Maintaining or building dignity and integrity while being honest is being kind to ourselves and others.” *The Twelve Traditions of EDA*\(^1\), p. 68

In EDA, I discovered that being honest with myself meant not only admitting what I was doing wrong, it meant understanding the thoughts and feelings that motivated my actions. This kind of honesty builds integrity because it requires me to accept responsibility for old ideas, plan how to address the root causes of my issues, and follow through with my plan.

For example, this week I was angry with my spouse. When I got honest with myself, I realized the root cause was selfish expectations: I wanted my spouse to sacrifice their time to meet my need for more social engagement. I accepted responsibility for being inconsiderate and decided to address my need for social connection by inviting neighbors out for a walk instead of over for dinner. My spouse was happy I wasn’t pushing an agenda. I was happy because I took care of myself without being demanding.

*Being honest and kind allows me to live at peace with myself and others.*

Submission 400

\(^1\) The *Twelve Traditions of EDA* draft document accessed at [www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org/literature](http://www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org/literature) on December 6, 2023. Tradition 11 discusses the EDA Motto (HEALTH): Honesty, Equality, Accountability, Love, Trust, and Humility.
January 4

“Having a sincere, clear purpose and acting from that purpose builds and maintains a perspective that allows us to embrace life’s challenges with dignity, grace, and a sense of humor.”

_Service in EDA_ (brochure)

I keep a hummingbird feeder outside my office window. It’s fun to see them while I work. One day, when I was frustrated with a project, I started thinking obsessively to distract myself from it. I looked up to see the feeder tilting precariously sideways. An iridescent green hummingbird was taking a drink, completely unbothered despite having to perch at an odd angle. There had been no questioning, no giving up. The little hummingbird simply flew in and landed where it needed to be, making small adjustments as it went.

In that moment, I realized I can be more like that hummingbird in my recovery. When I become overwhelmed by challenges, when strong emotions catch me off guard, when I lose my footing and sense of direction, I don’t need to panic or compensate with obsessive thoughts. I can simply make small adjustments, guided by my Higher Power and higher purpose, to face obstacles with dignity, grace, and even humor.

*Higher Power, higher purpose, please give me clarity in moments of challenge so that I see how to adapt and adjust.*
Reflections on Recovery

January 5

“All I need is a modicum of strength and stability in four areas: physical, mental/intellectual, emotional/social, and spiritual/purpose oriented.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 493

Before recovery, I thought of strength and balance as “strong mind, strong body, strong spirit”—multidimensional—but disconnected from my daily life. In recovery, I began to apply wisdom from wherever I could find it, including my Tai Chi practice.

Tai Chi taught me that strength is more than muscle development and that stability is not static. Balance is fluid. My attention needs to shift from one area to another rather than staying fixed on one spot. Aligned with an inner source of strength that grounds me, I can change focus as I shift my body, yet remain stable. This awareness of balance as a dynamic force applies to all aspects of my life.

I can remain flexible in my responses. I can shift focus to whatever comes next throughout the day. When I struggle, I don’t need to fall. Catching myself is a welcome and powerful practice! I realign as often as necessary. Each time I regain my balance, I integrate new insights, and my movements become fluid again. I can flow gracefully from one situation to the next.

*Today I will respond with grace and flexibility to whatever life brings.*

Submission 335
January 6

“The hard thing for me to accept is that a central reality of being human means making mistakes, and my perfectionism goes completely against that.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 463

I used to think the most infuriating part of being me was knowing the proper thing to do but watching myself not do it—over and over again.

I believed that *if only* I could always do the right thing, make the right choice, and avoid mistakes, then I would be perfect. The reality is that my less-than-perfect behavior might not stop any time soon. The business of living is fraught with indecision and missteps for everyone. Having a goal gives me something to aim for, but it is unrealistic to expect myself to always do the right thing even if I know what that is. As painful as mistakes can be, today they remind me that I am human. I can learn from every experience, if I am willing.

The choices I make to maintain my recovery and to work my program each day give me the perspective and power to make better choices in the future. I don’t have to beat myself up when I fall short of a goal. I am learning, at last, to be human.

*I accept that progress in recovery requires willingness, not perfection.*
Reflections on Recovery

January 7

“...when I focused on what was wrong, I was more likely to seek solace in old behaviors.” EDA Big Book, p. 491

When I was in my eating disorder, all I could see was what was wrong with me and the world. I judged my fears as bad and used eating disordered behaviors to punish, then comfort myself. I saw everything through a self-absorbed and negative lens, all gloom and doom, with no room for another interpretation.

A daily gratitude practice as part of my 10th Step inventory has shifted my perspective. Focusing on what I’m doing right and on what is going well helps me manage fear. I now understand that fear is a normal human instinct that points me toward constructive action. I see that pain and hardship are part of life, but so are love and beauty. Even on my worst days, when it feels like I can’t do anything right, I can find solace in a candle’s light, socks that fit just right without slipping down my ankles, or a cup of hot lavender tea. When I look at my life as a whole, it is easier to see how much is right and good—both in me and in the world.

Today I will focus on the milestones rather than on the stumbling blocks.
January 8

“When we take care of basics, it is much easier to find a sane and reasonable perspective no matter what else is happening around us.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 188

The EDA Big Book tells us that when we take good care of ourselves, the “tiger within” settles down. I’ve learned that when I take small actions to care for myself, ferocious feelings become manageable emotions that I can channel appropriately using the tools of the program.

It was eye-opening to learn that I am responsible for meeting my own basic needs; no one else was coming to do things for me. Initially I was dismayed, but today I’m excited because I can do the simple acts that I hear outlined at every meeting: if hungry, eat; if angry, find a safe outlet; if lonely, reach out; if tired, sleep; if ashamed, talk about it. These actions, combined with written inventories, calls with fellow members, and EDA meetings, are part of my basic self-care, which helps me find a sane and reasonable perspective.

*Today, if I get upset, bored, or lonely, I will find something to do that helps me, or find someone else to help.*

Submission 072
Reflections on Recovery

January 9

“Willingness, commitment, and perseverance have been keys to my freedom!” EDA Big Book, p. 387

A few years ago, I was stuck in a miserable relationship and a demanding, boring job. I was plagued by resentment, self-doubt, and loneliness. My eating disorder was a source of comfort that created a buffer between me and all that unmanageability.

When I joined EDA, I found more than a program—I found a family. Every time I embraced the fellowship by coming to meetings and doing service, I received truth, hope, humor, and an antidote to loneliness. Other members reminded me to “keep coming back,” so I didn’t give up when I was tempted to quit. When my progress felt too slow, I heard “I've been there, too” and felt reassured. Sponsors guided me through the Twelve Steps, while teaching me compassion for myself and empathy for others. As a result, my negative attitude toward my relationship, job, and myself gradually changed to positive acceptance.

Even when the concept of a Higher Power feels remote, the fellowship is a source of power that fuels my willingness to persevere. I am honored to have service commitments that keep me coming back and also giving back to this amazing fellowship.

May I find a way to serve the fellowship that supports me.

Submission 232
January 10

“We can reflect and be grateful that we are now able to experience depth of feeling and attachment without having to numb ourselves. Our ability to experience pain without running from it becomes a strength that can bring hope to others who struggle as we once did.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 158

I fought against feelings most of my life, using my eating disorder to cope with highs and lows. I fought because I was afraid. I thought feelings had the power to destroy me, and I was helpless.

Since joining EDA, I’ve developed a new perspective—*feelings are only feelings, and they’re temporary*. I’ve learned new tools that allow me to experience a full range of emotions. I can just sit with the feeling or take appropriate action, using my emotions as an internal compass. When I’m angry, I can set a boundary or right a wrong—or recognize that I had unreasonable expectations. When I’m lonely, I can text or call a friend. When I’m afraid, I can objectively plan ways to address the issue, reduce risk, or change my perspective on the situation. After all, maybe it’s an opportunity! Pausing and staying present with whatever I’m feeling strengthens my recovery.

*When I sit with my feelings, I get useful information from them, and they pass.*
Reflections on Recovery

January 11

“Happily, I have come to understand that I do not have to be ‘perfect’ in any, let alone all, aspects of my life to be in balance”
EDA Big Book, p. 493

When I first came to EDA I wanted to be perfectly balanced, like a chair. Four legs on the floor, and no wobbling! I thought every meal should be balanced, and that I should have equal amounts of work and play. Although I didn’t realize it, I was thinking rigidly about balance!

Today, balance is my goal, but there are still days when I don’t exercise or do my inventory. Sometimes I lose my temper, struggle to connect to my Higher Power, or eat reactively. In recovery, I respond with compassion. When I find myself out of balance, I’m not afraid because I know how to find balance again. I take a gentle walk and reflect on what is going right. I call a fellow EDA member and share what is going on. I do a small act of service. I write about how I feel and what I can do about it. My thinking and eating normalize as I take care of myself.

*When I find myself out of balance, I’ll remember this is normal because balance is always changing, never rigid.*
January 12

“If we trust in our Higher Power or higher purpose and we are doing everything we can to set aside our fears and do what we think is the right thing, we will have to trust that the outcome will be okay.” EDA Big Book, p. 122

Before working the steps, I was often paralyzed by indecision and regularly second-guessed myself. It seemed like an endless loop. Feelings of isolation, guilt, and shame rumbled under the surface of my seemingly stable life.

Working EDA’s Twelve Steps has slowly helped me build self-trust. Now I take care of basics and reach out for help whenever I hear that voice of self-doubt. I use the tools I’ve learned from the EDA Big Book and from meetings to realign with my Higher Power. I then reach out to help someone else.

Recognizing and sharing milestones still takes practice, but doing so helps me celebrate the wins and focus on what is within my power. When I acknowledge the goodness of others and my own progress, it becomes easier to ask for help instead of relying on old behaviors. In return, my HP sends guidance, and I am embraced by those around me with love and compassion.

Today I am developing deeper trust in my Higher Power and in myself.

Submission 173
Reflections on Recovery

January 13

“When anxious or troubled, do something that focuses attention on your physical senses, get outside, pray, or meditate. Then deal with the problem head-on.” *EDA Big Book*, p. xv

I recently experienced the calming power of focusing on my physical senses. I had just arrived in my home state to visit my family of origin, and billboard messages immediately inflamed my resentment about politics, which were a source of conflict within my family.

Then, while waiting in the hot car for my partner to run an errand, I noticed the breeze on my skin. As I breathed deeply and soaked in that pleasant feeling, I was struck by a novel thought: “Who am I to say that this state, these people, should be different than they are?” What a concept! My resentment melted away and was replaced by humility.

Focusing on the cool breeze calmed me so that I could see a new perspective—that I was there to love my family just as they are. I was able to greet them with respect and acceptance later that day. While I still hope that my example inspires them to seek common ground on divisive topics, I now realize that I want my love to be unconditional.

*May I be present for physical sensations and open to changes in perspective.*

Submission 203
January 14

“[W]hen I try to control my life, whether through food or chemicals, I end up unhappy and sick. But when I surrender fully to my Higher Power and live life the way God wants me to, things are better—and life is beautiful.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 433

Engaging in my eating disorder felt like paddling a canoe upstream. Moving forward was difficult, navigating was hard, and I was exhausted.

My Step Four inventory showed me that the resistance was of my own making. I wanted my weight to be different than where it naturally settled; I wanted to have more stamina than was possible; and I disregarded my inner wisdom about what I needed while trying to get what I thought I wanted.

Today, recovery feels like sailing. My Higher Power and people I love are wind in my sails. My sense of my basic needs is an inner compass, guiding my actions until I arrive in a safe harbor. Sometimes life gets intense, and I need to slow down, let go of an outcome, and trust that I will be ok, even if things don’t go as I wanted. When I pause and wait for the storm to pass, I see more clearly where I need to go.

*When I let go of self-will, I enjoy the journey.*

Submission 265
“My story starts out pretty much like everyone else’s. I came from a dysfunctional family and all that entails.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 52

For years, grief over not being close to my family, who rejected me for being lesbian, was a driving force in my eating disorder. I didn’t want to feel the enormous pain of that loss.

A big part of recovery is facing and accepting feelings, including the trauma caused by a dysfunctional family. My emotions helped me find a path to healing. I had to grieve my losses, shout out my anger, and shake with fear. I let it all out. I discovered that when I let my emotions flow in and through me, they eventually dissipate. When my needs were met, my fierce emotions calmed down.

Of course, figuring out how to meet needs that were unmet for years is still challenging, but now I know it’s my responsibility to meet these needs, and I have the power to do so. When I accepted that truth, and took action to care for myself and connect to others—without relying too heavily on anyone—I was amazed to find myself happy and free.

*Today, I will feel my feelings and meet my unmet needs.*
January 16

“Steps Two through Twelve are all about finding the power to gain and then retain the sanity that enables you to lead a happy and purposeful life.” *EDA Big Book*, p.117

What does it mean to live a purposeful life? Before EDA, my life was driven by negative emotions and actions. All I ever thought about was what I and others were doing wrong. Sometimes, I was so busy beating myself up or blaming others for my troubles that I could barely be available for anyone else.

By working EDA’s Twelve Steps and being an active member of our recovery community, I play a vital role in my own life. I don’t feel lost or alone today. I am no longer self-obsessed, nor do I measure my worth based on my weight. Today, I have the choice to be a helpful friend, a kind shoulder to lean on, and a grateful, loving member of EDA. I appreciate myself more and recognize my positive actions in recovery, one day at a time. I thank my Higher Power for this newfound freedom and for a life of opportunity and purpose.

*Today, I choose to live with purpose by aligning my actions with the will of my Higher Power.*

Submission 033
Reflections on Recovery

January 17

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character that stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 178

We all have value in this world, even when we’re struggling. One time when I contemplated using eating-disordered behaviors, I decided to pick up the phone and call a fellow EDA member. I listened to her as best as I could, despite my uneasiness and wandering mind. My urge to use eating disordered behaviors diminished. When she later shared that I had helped her tremendously, I started to cry. I realized my higher self had been working in and through me—imperfections, shortcomings, and all—when I chose to be of service rather than engaging in behaviors.

I don’t need to act out if I’m feeling restless, irritable, or discontent. Even when I am struggling, I can still be useful to others.

*Today, let me remember that I am supported when I support others.*

Submission 037

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January 18

“An eating disorder is not about food, the body, or weight; it is an ineffective solution to a problem that has become concealed to the point of being unrecognizable. In effect, an eating disorder successfully distracts everyone from focusing on the true problem underneath.” *EDA Big Book*, p. xxvii

For years I attempted to be rid of my eating disorder by focusing on its symptoms. How ineffective and painful that was!

I recently lapsed into old behaviors while feeling overwhelming and paralyzing emotions—but this time something was different. For the first time, I saw clearly that I chose to rely on the eating disorder instead of my Higher Power. I now understood what EDA members mean when they say eating disorders are not about food or weight, that these disorders distract us from addressing the true, underlying issues that go far deeper than the way we look or the number on the scale.

So this time, I wrote an inventory of the problem that caused the overwhelming emotions. I prayed and meditated to connect with my Higher Power and talked with a friend for emotional support. In addition to feeling better sooner than I expected, I gained clarity about how to address my situation with integrity.

*By addressing my root cause issues, I begin my journey to freedom.*
Reflections on Recovery

January 19

“... that where there is hatred, I may bring love;” *EDA Big Book*, p. 194

My eating disorder stripped me of self-respect and self-care, leaving me with self-loathing. Before I could bring love to the world and the people around me, I first needed to address this hatred inside and learn to love myself in healthy ways. EDA offers myriad paths to self-love, including prayer and meditation, milestones, and a focus on what I am doing right.

Today, I give myself the time, attention, and kindness I need. I take care of basic needs first and rely on the wisdom I get from my Higher Power to guide me on small decisions throughout the day. As I practice these principles, my perspective shifts outward, seeking creative solutions and ways to be of useful service. I appreciate others and life around me. Joy, self-worth, and a sense of purpose emerge when I do.

When faced with resentments, I pray the Sick Man’s prayer. As I offer myself and others patience and forgiveness, I find relief from the self-loathing and self-destruction of my eating disorder. Having first loved myself and my Higher Power, I now gladly pour resources, time, and energy—and especially love—into the world.

*May I remember that self-compassion enables me to extend deeper compassion to others.*
January 20

“In my experience, recovery is ongoing, with twists, turns, peaks, valleys, and plateaus … the more I follow the tenets of the Steps and rely on Him, the better I am able to see the improvements in my everyday life.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 303

Improvements in recovery can come slowly. Life doesn’t follow my expectations. It surprises me—sometimes with joy, sometimes with sorrow. Like recovery, the process of living entails ups and downs, but working the Steps and seeking God’s will helps me navigate these.

Whatever my physical challenges or emotional pain, whatever my anxieties or burdens, I’m not alone. I can reach out to people, read literature, and pause, pray, and persist. The Steps guide my choices and encourage me as I seek inner tranquility and wisdom. I take a deep breath and think positively: recall a beautiful memory, cherish those who love me, focus on the greater good, do the next right thing, and support myself with the tools.

A Higher Power—I call it the “Loving Unknown”—speaks to me through pets, nature, music, meetings, and other wonderfully creative, unexpected avenues as I navigate my daily life and recovery. All I have to do is refocus on that loving power!

*I can rely on something or someone greater than myself for compassion, insight, and strength.*

Submission 157
Reflections on Recovery

January 21

“Celebrating what is good and right about our bodies—exactly as they are—is a foundational idea in EDA that empowers us to move forward with life.” EDA Body Acceptance (brochure)

As a ballroom dance teacher before recovery, I struggled to control my body so I could win more competitions, gain more students, and prove myself as good as other teachers. I was perpetually mad at my body for not performing to my standards. When I came to EDA and worked Step One, I quit striving to control my body’s size, shape, and performance. I assumed I was also finished as a dancer and teacher; after all, how could I win or stand in front of students with my body looking so different from my former ideal?

As I’ve continued working the steps, I’ve developed more humility, realizing I’m neither the best nor the worst, just one dancer among many. I’ve gained perspective about what really matters, which is my love of sharing the joy of dance with others. Now I experience dance and teaching in an entirely different way. I get to be of service, demonstrating that bodies of all kinds can move creatively with music. I get to experience pure joy in the moment, free of self-judgment.

Today I accept and appreciate my body as it is.
January 22

“It turns out that humility—having a modest view of our own importance relative to things that matter in the long run—freed us to experience life on an altogether different plane.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 175

Humility is vital in Step Seven, where we ask for our shortcomings to be removed. To embrace humility, I identified my long-term priorities. The shift from self-centeredness to reinforcing what truly matters increased my humility. I was surprised to discover that there are many more important things relative to myself, with one overarching theme: to love and help others.

Of course, I can't effectively support others if I don’t put myself first and care for my basic needs. This is emphasized at every EDA meeting. My humility grows as I address my basic needs, perform acts of service, and prioritize what truly matters. When I seek to align my behavior with service to the greater good, it feels like humility, and I am at peace. I'm immensely grateful for this transformative program!

*May I always remember that love and service are what matter most.*
Reflections on Recovery

January 23

“Ask others for input, then make your own decisions.” *EDA Big Book*, p. xv

When I was dominated by my eating disorder, I struggled with decisions. For a while, I made them strictly on my own, rejecting any input from others because I trusted no one. Later, I swung to the other extreme and turned my will and my life—and my decisions—over to the care of others. That didn’t work either, because people aren’t higher powers—they do not necessarily understand the full picture, and it is unreasonable to expect them to do so.

Today, thanks to EDA, I have found balance in this area. My new process is to ask for help, consider my options, and then make decisions based on what I think my Higher Power would have me do. Instead of making challenging decisions all on my own when my emotions are high, I pause and ask people I trust for input. This phase humbles me and gives me perspective and clarity. When I weigh my alternatives and listen for guidance from my Higher Power, I can trust that my decision will be good for me.

*I embrace the power of pausing to consider other perspectives before making my own decision.*
January 24

“Self-pity will disappear . . . Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 185

A co-worker recently told me our workload would triple in the near future. Instantly, I wanted to dive into my ED.

Instead, I did a spot check inventory and asked myself, “What in me feels threatened?” My ambition, financial security, and self-esteem all seemed to be at risk. I worried about not being able to adapt and not being able to say “no” to unreasonable demands. I worried about being miserable in my job and about losing my job.

I reviewed the things I could change, including being more flexible about my workload, less perfectionistic about the way I complete lower priority work, and more firm about not staying late. All those ideas felt overwhelming too, so I prayed the Serenity Prayer, and yelled to my Higher Power, “You will help me through this!” The strong impulse to act out with eating disordered behaviors subsided soon after. Self-pity disappeared, and my mood improved.

Today I know that when self-pity and fear disrupt my balance, I can take responsibility for my part, trust in my Higher Power, and approach challenges from a calm perspective.

*I am grateful for the ability to make new choices and respond from a place of balance.*
Reflections on Recovery

January 25

“Everything hinges on whether we can find a Higher Power or higher purpose that we trust enough to be willing to set aside our fears, self-pity and resentments.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 124

My eating disorder and obsessive thinking plagued me for nearly my entire life. I appeared functional and successful, but my inner life was full of self-criticism. I was tormented, focused on body image and whatever magic diet or supplement was going to make me “acceptable.”

It was hard to work Step Two until I read that all I needed was enough trust to be “willing.” I didn't have to be perfect at it. I didn't need to be totally willing or totally trusting. I found I could trust my Higher Power enough to set aside my negativity and self-criticism for just a little while each day. When I did this, I noticed something unexpected: I was able to focus more on what was going right. Keeping it simple – trusting the process and being willing – still sees me through life’s inevitable ups and downs. A small shift in awareness – that I don’t have to do anything perfectly – is all I need to keep moving forward with willingness.

*An essential ingredient of my recovery is trust in the process and my Higher Power.*
January 26

“. . . we often seek ‘the’ answer, or ‘the’ story, rather than looking for our own.” EDA Big Book, p. xxii

For so many years I sought the answer: the person, the place, the book, the relationship, the achievement, or the job that would magically solve all my problems and make my life perfect. Instead of getting better, I just found different ways to stay sick—because I was looking in the wrong places!

None of the answers I sought outside myself worked. EDA has given me new tools, and I delight in using them. I have learned so much about myself, about why I did the things I did in the past, and about what does and doesn’t serve me today. I ask questions and get answers. The more I learn, the more I want to know. The more I overcome, the more I’m willing to face. I have regained the power to choose for myself.

Paradoxically, the more I focus my awareness and energy on my own recovery, the more help I have to offer others. Rather than getting lost in the biographies of strangers, I have picked the pen back up to author the book of my life.

While I may benefit from outside sources to teach me, recovery is an inside job.
Reflections on Recovery

January 27

“...I am now willing to learn and grow from the full spectrum of experiences on this path, from the 10,000 joys to the 10,000 sorrows.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 400

When I was in my eating disorder and crippled by my fears, I kept my life small, and so my eating disorder needed to be large. I resorted to eating disordered behaviors whenever unfamiliar situations or feelings felt overwhelming, which was often.

In EDA, my life is getting bigger as I learn to tolerate more types of experiences and emotions, both joyful and sad. EDA has taught me that if I am kind and patient with myself, I can dust myself off and get back on track if these situations momentarily derail me. I can now rely on my Higher Power and higher purpose to give me perspective. I don’t need my old behaviors to calm myself down anymore.

I have noticed dramatic changes in who I am becoming. Doing a 10th Step each day clears the path to my Higher Power and higher purpose, which gives me the strength and peace to live my life more fully, with joys, sorrows, and everything in between.

*I can face whatever life brings when I am kind and patient with myself.*
January 28

“We have commenced a daily practice that builds inner trust, as well as trust with other people. We take care of ourselves so we can be free to serve our God, our Higher Power, or our higher purpose.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 199

My daily practice sustains my recovery. For example, this morning I made a statement that seemed to upset my boss. I was unsure what was wrong. What was my part?

Though feeling ill at ease, I did something kind for a coworker – a practice that often helps settle me down. Once calmer, I wrote out a spot check inventory, a practice that helps me catch errors in thinking and figure out what to do. I realized the comment I’d thought was smart and useful encroached on the domain of expertise of a colleague my boss had asked me to help become more confident. I’d just stolen the spotlight when I could have used it to help my colleague shine: I’d been selfish. I talked with my boss and apologized. I am grateful my boss gives me opportunities to demonstrate leadership. It felt good to work my program and start to rebuild trust.

*My daily practice gives me the strength and humility to see my part, do the right things, and serve people unselfishly.*
Reflections on Recovery

January 29

“Get basic needs met first. If hungry, eat. If angry, find a safe outlet. If lonely, reach out. If tired, sleep. If ashamed, talk about it.” EDA Big Book, p. xv

Using food and eating-disordered behaviors only made my life more unmanageable. EDA has taught me to put my basic needs first instead of trying to control or manage the world around me. Taking care of myself is a new concept for me, and though it sometimes feels unfamiliar and uncomfortable, it’s helping me to discover freedom.

Nourishing my body, addressing my feelings, going for walks, reading, resting, meditating, and connecting with others are some of the ways I practice self-care. This creates a sanctuary within me – an inner peace. When I’m restored to balance, I’m able to feel the safety and security that I sought in my eating disorder. The more I live in balance, the more I come to know my true self. It turns out, the real me is whole, not broken. I am not my eating disorder, and it no longer has to stand in my way.

Today, I can restore my balance by taking care of my basic needs. In doing so, I can find peace and share it with others.

Submission 102
January 30

“Bringing our pain out into the open so we can address underlying thinking takes great courage.” EDA Body Acceptance (brochure)

I spent my life running from emotional pain. Still, no matter how much I controlled my food or relied on my eating disorder to relieve me, the pain was always there, dictating my thinking and how I reacted to life.

Day by day, moment by moment, I’m learning to open up about my emotional pain. I attend and share at EDA meetings, work with my therapist, and try to be honest and authentic with others. I also write a daily 10th Step inventory to help me unearth and look at the fear, anger, resentments, and shame that cause my emotional pain. When I experience these emotions or am not seeing clearly, I pause, “spot-check” my day, and ask my Higher Power for the courage to acknowledge what’s troubling me. When I face emotional pain, I stop being a victim of it. When I see my part in the situation—which is often simply an error in the way I’m thinking about it—I free myself from the pain.

*Today, I don’t need to run from or react to emotional pain. Steps 10 and 11 help me respond with clarity, confidence, and freedom.*
Reflections on Recovery

January 31

“It’s hard not to want to rush things, but recovery is a process, not an event. It is about honesty and willingness to grow, and experiencing that growth. I am happy to remember to enjoy life, because this is a life I wouldn’t have had if I didn’t step onto the road of recovery.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 421

Before recovery, I could never escape the harsh, critical voice of my eating disorder. The more I used eating disordered behaviors to avoid or appease it, the louder it became. I was tired of trying to tune it out. I was consumed with judgment and fear.

In EDA, I learned recovery is not about judgment or living in fear. Instead, it is about learning to listen to myself and acknowledging my thoughts and feelings with interest and compassion. It’s about taking care of my basic needs without guilt or shame. It’s accepting that perfection doesn’t exist and choosing to love and trust myself instead.

I needed to reinforce and practice these new attitudes and self-care actions over and over, because recovery is a process, not an event. Now, whatever I go through, I cultivate gratitude and self-love to the best of my ability, one day at a time.

*Today, I can cope with strong emotions and show myself compassion.*

Submission 105
February 1

“Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” *EDA Big Book*, p 117

For decades, I thought my past defined who I’d always be regardless of how hard I tried to change. Sure, I believed God could restore people to sanity, but I believed He wouldn’t restore me. I felt that I didn’t deserve restoration—I was too far gone, broken, willful, and stubborn.

When I came to my first EDA meeting, I wept as I told my story because I thought that no one could truly understand. To my surprise, EDA members graciously listened without interrupting or judging. They suggested that I keep coming back, so I did. The more I came to EDA meetings and listened, the more I heard others telling my story. Yes, the people, places, and situations were different, but our emotional responses to life were the same.

My story is not unique, and that’s a good thing. The Twelve Steps of EDA provide a guideline for restoration. When I follow the guideline, admitting that I’m powerless and recognizing that God can and will restore people like me to sanity, I lose my fear and gain recovery.

*I am restored when I work the Steps, let go of control, and rely on God.*

Submission 412
Reflections on Recovery

February 2

“Our job in Step Two is to identify or define something greater than ourselves that we can open ourselves up to and trust, for we need to rely on it.” EDA Big Book, p. 120

When I first joined EDA, I could see many powers greater than myself, but I couldn’t see how relying on one would remove my eating disorder. The extreme intensity of my emotions when I tried to stop my eating disordered behaviors scared me. I knew I needed to be restored to sanity!

My problem was with the idea of reliance. What could I rely on to put things into perspective when I was livid, despondent, or drowning in self-pity? I eventually realized that it matters a great deal to me to serve causes I care about: my higher purpose. Trusting and relying on the power of my higher purpose gave me the willingness to take care of my own needs.

With needs met, I am calmer and more focused when serving causes that matter most to me. Serving my higher purpose creates an objective frame of reference that enables me to use emotions I once feared to uncover my truth and live at peace with myself and others.

Relying on a higher purpose enables me to be calm, resolute, and free of my eating disorder.
February 3

“Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God* as God may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 486

When I came to EDA, I immediately loved the idea that EDA’s leaders are just trusted servants who don’t govern, but I also worried that the group conscience was some cult-like invocation of a mystical and unknowable Being that I didn’t believe in.

I was delighted to discover that the group conscience process is simple and practical. Each person who is participating in a vote consults their conscience about how the decision will affect the group’s commitment to its primary purpose—carrying the message of recovery from eating disorders with the greatest possible clarity. When everyone affected is considered, the vote—literally the conscience of the group—amounts to a power greater than any one member. As EDA members, we abide by these decisions of the group conscience. It is so cool to see this in action!

*Focusing on our primary purpose when making group decisions helps us stay unified and committed to what matters.*

* “God” in EDA literature can mean the Deity, a deity, a spiritual entity of one’s own understanding (a Higher Power), or a non-spiritual conception (a higher purpose).
Reflections on Recovery

February 4

“We treat everyone respectfully because we are all equals. We focus on the positive aspects of our own actions and help others to do the same. We celebrate milestones together. Milestones are thoughts and actions that promote our recovery, helping us notice what we did right.” The Twelve Traditions of EDA\(^3\), p. 68

Once EDA’s founding members started relying on their own inner wisdom—connecting to a Higher Power or higher purpose to provide perspective—they realized the importance of having confidence in their own autonomy and authority rather than depending on external validation. This insight led them to establish the principle of equality in EDA: we respect ourselves and each other—regardless of recovery status or distance from eating disordered behaviors—because what matters most in recovery is willingness to focus on what we are doing right.

When we celebrate milestones in EDA meetings, we recognize and appreciate that recovery comes from taking deliberate action to build trust with ourselves, as guided by our inner wisdom.

I have learned a great deal from newcomers, and I love that all are equal in EDA!

*I celebrate everyone’s milestones, including my own.*

Submission 401

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\(^3\) The *Twelve Traditions of EDA* draft document accessed at [www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org/literature](http://www.eatingdisordersanonymous.org/literature) on December 6, 2023. Tradition 11 discusses the EDA Motto (HEALTH): Honesty, Equality, Accountability, Love, Trust, and Humility.
February 5

“Whether we practice formal prayer and meditation, or practice conscious reliance on a higher purpose, our understanding will likely evolve over time. Step Eleven encourages us to start with whatever conceptions we trust, and work mindfully and deliberately to explore how we can use the power of these ideas in our day to day lives.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 193

A personal relationship with a Higher Power seemed baffling at first. I didn’t know how to rely on anything I couldn’t see; it seemed dangerous to trust something so intangible. I heard others say I could start by relying on the EDA program, that I could experience my Higher Power “wearing human skin.” I found that when I couldn’t feel spiritual support, I could reach out for and feel support from a sponsor and fellow members.

I now realize my Higher Power *is* my EDA community. In this community, I practice conscious reliance on a higher purpose, something greater than myself. I receive encouragement and power by connecting with others.

Although it took time for my heart to open and trust others, I saw lives being transformed, and I started to rely on the fellowship. It was a beginning, and for me, it was enough.

*Higher Power comes in many forms, and I trust myself to find my own truth.*

Submission 117
Reflections on Recovery

February 6

“Before the Twelve Steps, I thought I just had to deal with my drinking and eating problems, but soon learned I had to deal with the thinking problems that caused these behavioral issues.”

EDA Big Book, p. 248-249

My eating disorder numbed my emotions, and it also stunted my growth because I didn’t learn from the opportunities emotions can provide. As a result, I was immature in my outlook and vulnerable to any emotions strong enough to break through my eating disordered defenses.

In EDA meetings I learned that I am not alone. By working the Twelve Steps, I gained the ability to sit with uncomfortable emotions and learn from them. I gradually unraveled unhealthy thinking patterns and healed some of the wounds that triggered intense emotional pain. Working my program reduces fear, isolation, and the eating disordered behaviors that once limited me.

Now, I feel a spaciousness within me. I feel connected to my EDA friends. I trust the process, practice patience, and allow my next right action to be revealed. Even if I sometimes feel a little anxious, especially when I take responsibility for myself, I persevere because I have a track record of success—and I love the relief I feel when I act with dignity.

When I live in reality, I learn and grow.

Submission 118
“We in EDA don’t find it helpful to count numbers of any sort: we don’t weigh or measure anything, including days or years of freedom. Instead, we recognize what we call ‘milestones of recovery,’ which are self-defined markers on our journey.” *EDA Big Book*, p. xvi

Before recovery, I was a slave to relentless and rigid counting of days, hours, and minutes. All-or-nothing thinking was all I knew. The eating disordered obsession was in control, and I felt helpless to change it.

This didn’t turn around overnight. It took time, support, and self-accountability to quiet the obsessive thoughts that drove the choices and behaviors in my life. Not counting—letting go of numbers—was the first milestone in my recovery. And thanks to my willingness to change how I measured success, I have experienced many more milestones. I found a new freedom and an enormous release from pressure when my focus shifted to the positive actions I take to meet my basic needs and heal. It makes recovery possible!

My recovery is my own, and I cannot compare myself to others. My milestones may look different from someone else’s, but they’re my self-defined markers on this healing journey.

*I celebrate any step I take forward, no matter how small.*
Reflections on Recovery

February 8

“...spiritual dependence produces independence from fear, self-pity, despair, myriad forms of obsession, and freedom from mortal peril.” EDA Big Book, p. xiv

At first, spiritual dependence was hard for me to understand. I considered myself to be spiritual but never depended on anything other than my willpower. That didn’t work well! When I let go of futile attempts to control the world around me and trusted that I would be ok, even if things didn’t go my way, I finally began to feel peace.

After practicing this a lot, I began to feel connected to my Higher Power, which, for me, is an inner strength and wisdom that flows from my ancestors. Today, spiritual dependence means that I admit when I am wrong, tell my truth gently and kindly, and follow my inner wisdom to get back on track.

This new dependence and trust give me freedom I never knew before. It’s the missing link I sought in my eating disorder but never found until recovery. Of course, I still feel overwhelmed at times, but I keep showing up and carrying on. I release expectations and allow life to unfold. I do my best and trust the rest.

Courage and freedom come from releasing my agenda and trusting my inner wisdom.
February 9

“Lord, make me a channel of thy peace.” EDA Big Book, p. 194

When I first came to EDA, my eating disorder was a secret I kept hidden from everyone. I felt guilty and ashamed, yet something inside wouldn’t let me stop. My eating disorder was like a wretched beast that twisted and turned, yearning for peace but never finding it.

My home group is an 11th Step meeting. I still remember the first time I heard the St. Francis Prayer—I was inspired! I realized that if I had peace, I could transmit it to others. I started working the Steps in earnest, for there was now a reason to recover that was bigger than myself.

By speaking my truth in meetings, I stopped feeling so ashamed. Sharing milestones helped me to grow stronger, and as I did, the beast within grew calmer.

My sponsor helped me learn to trust myself, find balance, keep perspective, and work the Steps with others so they could do so, too. I still do my best to hold a torch—not just in EDA, but in life. I take care of basics, pray, meditate, and look for ways to serve every day.

Helping others inspires me to do the work of recovery so I can be a channel of peace and hope.
Reflections on Recovery

February 10

“Many times, we found we had relied on other people, institutions, or principles to solve our problems, to validate us, or to reward us in some way. We had expectations that were neither realistic nor reasonable.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 145

I used to exhaust myself by seeking validation from other people and my job, routinely overcommitting to plans and projects at the expense of self-care.

Early in recovery, I learned that I need to balance my time and energy and to make choices about how to do this based on self-trust, not based on pleasing others. I now pause before taking on new commitments and ask myself, “What are reasonable expectations for me?” When I don’t know the answer to that question, I use my physical senses or emotions as a guide. If I am feeling tired, my body may be telling me that I need rest more than a new project or plans with friends. If I’m feeling lonely or bored, it makes sense to say yes to a stimulating opportunity.

When I make choices based on self-trust, I am better able to serve the greater good than when I make choices to get approval from other people.

*Regardless of what others request or my ego suggests, it is my responsibility to choose what works for me.*
February 11

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 28

I say this prayer in times of turmoil, when I don’t know what to do. When the idea of God seems remote, I say a shorter version of the Serenity Prayer: “Bless them, change me.” When I feel strong emotions in reaction to someone else, the solution is not to try to change them or avoid them. Rather, it’s to keep the focus on myself by meeting my basic needs and taking inventory from a place of safety and self-care.

The 10th Step inventory form focuses on my errors in thinking (not what’s wrong with the person who upset me), because ultimately, I can only change myself. When completing the resolution column or thinking through possible amends, I may realize that I need to set a boundary or change how I interact with a challenging person. But the bottom line is, I have to accept other people, and sometimes praying for them or repeatedly wishing them well is the only way I can do this.

*When I keep my perspective focused on my own attitudes and actions, my next right step becomes clear.*

Submission 204
Reflections on Recovery

February 12

“Your experience may have demonstrated that you cannot completely trust yourself to honor commitments of the sort required of you here. But please be assured that the point of Steps Four through Nine is to sweep away any barriers to your sanity and integrity so you will be able to honor your commitments.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 130

After experiencing emotional neglect as a child, I grew up physically neglecting myself through my eating disorder. My eating disorder became an automatic response to distress that made it seem natural to ignore my basic needs. Although it was my responsibility to care for myself as an adult, I didn’t know how.

In EDA, I learned that I had to honor this fundamental commitment—to take care of myself—and I learned how to do this. Milestones shared in meetings gave me concrete examples of self-care. My childhood wounds began to heal through working the Steps with a sponsor and getting outside help from a therapist. This process was uncomfortable and involved many fits and starts, but I gradually transformed into the reliable adult I always needed.

Today, I trust myself! I have the emotional bandwidth and willingness to take care of myself on every level and even to help others.

*I recover by taking care of basics and working the Steps.*

Submission 248
February 13

“[Example Resolution] for a shame: Work on using my voice and realize that I am not here to make everyone happy. I am here to become the authentic person I believe I was meant to be, with grace and dignity.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 155

I used to be terrified when alone with my thoughts because they were full of self-loathing and shame. I suppressed them, distracting myself with food, eating-disordered behaviors, and a crazy schedule. It seemed safer than being myself. However, distractions are not permanent solutions, and my ways of “coping” and “comforting” were killing me. I knew something had to change.

Early recovery was messy. All those pent-up emotions came spewing out. I felt horrible, and for a while, life felt even more unmanageable than before. Then, as I started to get honest with myself and others, I realized many of my “truths,” such as blaming my parents for my own adult choices, were errors in my thinking that kept me stuck.

Regaining trust with myself by changing my perspective wasn’t easy, but it enabled me to live authentically, which was safer and saner than people-pleasing and overachieving. I now find kind and humble ways to speak my truth.

*Using my voice honestly empowers me to grow into the person I’ve always wanted to be.*
Reflections on Recovery

February 14

“...Steps One and Two are laying a foundation. We need to open ourselves to a relationship with something greater than ourselves to get through the remaining steps and fully recover.”
EDA Big Book, p. 118

I found the whole “relying on a power greater than myself” idea awkward, even though I was clear that what I had been doing wasn’t working. I had to find concepts that worked for me.

When reading the word “God” in EDA literature, I remember that we can use many different approaches. Some that helped me at different times—and made me smile—are “Group of Desperados”, “Good Orderly Direction”, “Grace Over Drama”, and “Dog spelled backwards”.

I now think of my Higher Power as my inner wisdom. I now accept that my higher purpose is to cultivate a broader perspective in my efforts to understand other people and choose compassion over judgment in my relationships. I feel my connection to all of humanity and the natural world when I am at peace, feeling joy, and in harmony with others. Gratitude—both for my own actions and for the efforts of others—brings me a calm and useful outlook that empowers me and keeps me going.

Step Two empowers me to be creative in defining something greater than myself that I can trust.
February 15

“Our strength lies in our diversity.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 109

As early as I can remember, I wanted to be like everyone around me. I wanted to be what others expected of me. I believed what I was told to believe, doubting—even denying—my own truth. I lived as an “ugly duckling”, not appreciating my authentic self.

A pine tree among oaks or a sunflower among roses doesn’t question itself about why it is there or why it is different. A sparrow doesn’t waste time trying to be an eagle. I had always appreciated the beauty, strength, and utility of different designs in nature, and I finally began to recover when I applied this wisdom to myself and learned to respect the diversity of others.

My recovery has been a journey of uncovering and learning to accept and appreciate myself as I am, including the differences and the similarities I share with others. Now when I soar, I don’t care whether I am an eagle or a sparrow. I remember that life is about balance and appreciation for who I am and what I can do, rather than bothering with what I am not or cannot do.

*Today I accept the ways I am different from others and allow my true self to shine through.*

Submission 290
Reflections on Recovery

February 16

“... I started to use my behaviors as learning experiences.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 276

In my recovery journey, I am learning that lapses into old patterns of thinking and behavior can make me stronger. What I used to call “breaks” or “slips” are really nothing more than nooks and crannies where the eating disorder still lurks. I just haven’t swept or dusted there yet. Now I can, and I do.

Looking back, I’m almost always able to see where one or more of my basic needs was not met. Somewhere along the way, I stopped putting my well-being first, usually out of fear or excitement. These lapses in self-care still dismay me, but they also humble me and make me stronger, wiser, more self-compassionate, and far more resilient. When I offer myself compassion and examine what happened, I come to understand what I need to do differently next time.

When my friends or I stumble in recovery, I say, “We’re learning what we most need to learn.” Often, the most important lesson is to love and care for ourselves through hard times.

*Today, I offer love and compassion to myself and to others. We don’t have to be perfect to be in recovery.*
February 17

“I used to feel confused when people in the rooms would mention that they were living a life beyond their wildest dreams.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 456

I had worked as a model and actress since my teens and loved that I was praised for my physical appearance. But my career was a trigger for my eating disorder.

When I first came to EDA, I heard people say they were living a life in recovery beyond their wildest dreams. I thought, “This is rubbish! I already had glamor and adventure, but I had to give it all up to recover.” I felt confused and angry because I didn’t know who I was without my career or my eating disorder.

Despite my confusion and anger, I listened when members shared and claimed milestones. I worked with a sponsor and did daily 10th and 11th Steps, which helped me uncover the “real” me. I discovered that I am more than a model or actress, and most important, more than my eating disorder. I am intelligent, creative, and kind. I work, I play, and I give service, sharing with others what helped me recover. Now I truly do have a life beyond my wildest dreams!

_Free from the eating disorder, my life is full, and I like who I am._

Submission 377
Reflections on Recovery

February 18

“Recovery is about feelings, not food.” EDA Big Book, p. xv

The first time I heard the phrase “it's about feelings, not food,” I found myself confused! The only topics that surfaced in my daily 10th Step revolved around food and body image. This all changed one day when my husband and I had a disagreement, and I found myself stewing in resentment. I saw my brain go from pain of conflict to cravings for familiar foods, and a lightbulb went off in my head. I made the connection between my sudden craving and my feelings of resentment and anger! That day I did a short inventory about the disagreement and recommitted myself to being of cheerful service. I realized that taking responsibility for my actions was part of fulfilling my higher purpose and that I needed to be transparent, accountable, and humble.

I apologized to my husband for my brash words, listened to his perspective, and we hugged. The craving did not dissipate immediately, but in a couple of hours I felt restored to balance. This is what it means to me to work the Steps.

Today, I compassionately investigate my true issues, then do the next right thing to move the greater good forward.
February 19

“If we can believe that we are not immune to fundamental healing forces, and if we can believe that surrender to the healing forces of nature can restore us to sanity, we are most of the way through Step Two.” EDA Big Book, p.118

When I came to Step Two, I was deeply religious but doubtful that a Higher Power could help me. I could see powerful forces of nature, such as lizards' tails regenerating and forests replenishing themselves over time, but I felt immune to this healing force.

This all changed when I sustained a knee injury. I was unable to run for many months, but through physical therapy and rest, my knee healed. From this experience, I came to believe that my body can restore itself to its natural state.

There was no denying that I had gone from intense physical pain to regaining my ability to participate in the sport I loved. I took Step Two by coming to believe that the same force that restored my knee could also restore my sanity. From there, I became ready to serve that power in Step Three.

I am a part of nature, and nature is a part of me. Because I trust my capacity to heal, I can be restored to sanity.
Reflections on Recovery

February 20

“Our only job as sponsors is to help sponsees figure out what they need to do, and encourage them to do it.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 232

I try to model the behavior I hope to see in sponsees. A sponsee might say, “My spouse looked at me like I’m silly, and then I really did something silly and engaged in an eating disordered behavior. I feel so stuck.” I might say, “Wow, I know what you mean. That’s happened to me, too. I felt disrespected and afraid that maybe my spouse always felt that way. I just wanted the anger and fear to go away. Why do you think you got so upset?”

After some discussion, I’ll point out what was wrong with my own thinking, e.g., depending too much on others’ opinions because I didn’t have reasonable expectations of myself. I’ll explain what I think and do differently now: I do what I respect and appreciate, and set realistic goals. I feel much better when I do what’s right and recognize my own successes instead of seeking validation from others.

I’ll ask my sponsee, “What can you do today that would help restore your dignity and integrity?” and “Are you willing to do that?”

*Helping others reminds me to demonstrate the attitudes and actions that lead to recovery.*

Submission 402
February 21

“We can find peace with food. We can enjoy it and we can leave it alone when we are not hungry. Our bodies will not punish us; they will be restored to health and balance.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 153

Years of disordered behaviors made it difficult to recognize when I was hungry or full. Maintaining awareness of my hunger cues was also a challenge due to my attention deficit disorder.

Learning to listen to my body and take care of it was a process. First, I had to prioritize sleeping when I felt tired and learn how to relax when I was tense. When I am calm and rested, recognizing hunger and fullness comes more easily.

I also developed a practice of getting quiet in the mornings. Instead of scrolling through my phone or jumping right into work, I started the day with prayer, meditation, or journaling. I visualized noticing and trusting hunger and fullness cues. Practicing this every morning helped me establish the self-awareness I needed to eat when hungry and stop when moderately full throughout the day. In the process, I developed trust with my body one day at a time and found peace with food.

*Taking care of basics and committing to moments of quiet throughout the day help me listen to and trust my body.*

Submission 440
“It’s not about the food.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 343

The concept that my problem wasn’t about food made logical sense to me as soon as I joined EDA. Yet, whenever I obsessed about food or weight, it really felt like the opposite—that my body or whatever I’d eaten was the problem after all.

It took many conversations in after-meetings and on the phone with other members, but eventually I began to recognize my real problems. An EDA friend would ask, “If you weren’t upset about food or weight, what would you be upset about?” And I began to be able to say, “I’d be upset about my job!” Or, my sponsor would say, “You say this body part is too big. What else in your life is too big?” When I had to respond without mentioning food or weight, I found myself answering, “My to-do list is too big!”

Eating disordered thoughts still get loud sometimes. But now I see it as a coded message, alerting me about something else that needs attention. The obsession is uncomfortable, but nowadays it passes soon after I pick up a pen or my phone to write about what’s really going on.

*I don’t need to fear the obsession. Instead, I learn from it and attend to the real issue.*
February 23

“Many uncomfortable truths accompany an understanding of the function of an eating disorder. When those truths are discovered and accepted, space is created and the mind is free to focus on alternative solutions.” *EDA Big Book*, p. xxviii

My eating disorder merely distracted me from fear, guilt, and despair. It never actually protected me or provided the solutions and self-esteem that I didn’t even know I was missing. This is what makes recovery so beautiful and powerful. Recovery gave me solutions for the reasons that I had an eating disorder. Working the Steps taught me what to look for and how to fill in the gaps. There were holes of all sizes in my self-esteem, ability to navigate relationships, and capacity to love others exactly as they are. I didn’t even understand the necessity of joy or purpose.

My sponsor and fellows in EDA gave me the support I needed to gradually develop confidence in the skills and attitudes that I’d lacked. I discovered that it’s a lot easier to do the hard work to live in balance than to continue suffering with an eating disorder—and it keeps getting easier.

*I can trust the support of EDA and my Higher Power to bring peace and fulfillment into my life, as long as I work for it.*

Submission 424
Reflections on Recovery

February 24

“Step One is an admission of defeat: despite our best efforts, we could not recover on our own. This is all that is required to make a solid beginning.” EDA Big Book, p.116

I spent years doing “half measures”. Despite hitting emotional bottom after emotional bottom, I struggled to admit my powerlessness and continued relying on my eating disorder to cope. Admitting defeat was painful, and the idea of fully surrendering was scary, but I didn’t lose hope: EDA meetings kept reminding me that recovery is a process—often messy and drawn out with many emotional ups, downs, twists, and turns.

Finally, after years of attending meetings and doing service, I found an EDA sponsor and mustered the inner strength to go to the lengths I’d long resisted, only to find that working the Steps wasn’t exactly magic. I had to put into action the resolutions that I’d outlined for each issue that drove my eating disordered behavior before I found lasting relief. Acting to implement resolutions required a great deal of support and encouragement from others, but today I am grateful that my path was so difficult. Otherwise, I never would have learned the importance of examples, empathy, self-compassion, and persistence.

We each have unique work we need to do to heal. Today, I respect my own recovery process.

Submission 427
February 25

“We continued (and continue) to listen to our conscience. When troubled, we get honest, make amends and change our thinking or behavior. We continue to notice what we do right, and we are grateful when engaged in right thinking and positive action.”

EDA Big Book, p. 187, Step Ten long form

When I joined EDA, I hadn’t acted out for a long time, yet disordered thinking and emotional pain kept me from achieving full recovery. I didn’t have a regular inventory practice that helped me see how I contributed to my emotional challenges. Because I couldn't own my part, I couldn't determine how I needed to change.

I was lucky that the sponsor who guided me through the Steps encouraged a daily 10th Step practice. Now, every day and whenever disturbed, I listen to my conscience, practice honesty, and become willing to find new ways of thinking. I surrender self-will, apologize when needed, and turn my thoughts to helping others. I celebrate milestones and notice the many things others do that are supportive and kind. The more I rely on this practice, the more it becomes second nature. I respond to life with more patience and love as I practice right thinking and sane behavior.

When I take responsibility for my part, I develop the ability to respond with integrity.
Reflections on Recovery

February 26

“Taking care of basics means: If hungry, eat. If angry, find a safe outlet. If lonely, reach out. If tired, sleep. If ashamed, talk about it…. We take care of ourselves so we can move beyond our immediate concerns to things that matter in the long run.”  
EDA Big Book, p. 153

The concept of “taking care of basics” did not make sense to me when I first came to EDA. I didn’t understand that the need for safety had both emotional and physical aspects. I also didn’t understand that failing to meet my own basic needs meant I would be quickly overwhelmed by the idea of serving others, which is important to me and my recovery.

In EDA, I learned to recognize and address my own needs. Tiredness often triggers my anxiety, and if I choose activity instead of rest, my anxiety gets worse. Now, I rest when tired. Anger can incapacitate me. I now ask myself why I am angry and take steps to resolve the issue. This calms me down.

I’ve learned to run through a “basic needs checklist” when feeling distressed. It amazes me that I want to be useful and of service when my needs are met.

*I nurture my body and spirit by taking care of my own basic needs first, then helping others.*
February 27

“A resentment is usually an unresolved anger or bitterness that lurks in the background of our minds, ready to jump out whenever an opportunity presents itself.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 215

For years I couldn’t understand why therapists said I needed to feel my anger, since it was clear to me that anger and resentment triggered my eating disordered behavior. Eventually, I learned that resentment is unresolved, suppressed anger that becomes toxic. When I’m resentful, others become the target of my rage and blame. I’m grateful that Steps Four through Nine help me defuse resentments.

In contrast to resentment, anger can be a normal, natural reaction to perceived danger. Feeling my anger and taking time to understand its source gives me opportunities to take constructive action, such as setting a boundary, addressing important safety concerns, or examining the source of my anger. I can trust anger to dissipate without harming me if I allow myself to feel it, and do a spot-check inventory to identify the actions I need to take. When I take action, firmly and calmly, anger drains away, leaving me feeling empowered and good about myself.

*I can trust anger and resentment will pass if I have the courage to feel them, work Steps Four through Nine, and take appropriate action.*
Reflections on Recovery

February 28

“I began envisioning the ED thoughts and voices to be a separate entity from the true self that I wanted to reconnect with. When faced with a thought or urge, I practiced taking a moment to analyze whether my ED voice or recovery voice was trying to dictate my actions and decisions, and I would act in accordance with the latter.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 344

Eating disordered voices in my head always urged me to do more, do better, eat differently, look prettier, and be smarter. In early recovery, this thinking even applied to how I worked my program. Whenever I struggled with eating disordered behaviors, I heard, “You need to be more fearless and thorough!”

Eventually my sponsor told me firmly that any God worth following wouldn’t speak harshly. I found that when I listened for a kind voice inside, I would hear whispers like, “Hey, sweetie, you’re actually ok, right here, right now,” and “Why don’t you try what you heard at the meeting, and see how it works?” I don’t know whether this voice is God, a Higher Power, or my true self—and that doesn’t matter to me. What matters is that this kind whisper has led me to full recovery.

*I follow the loving inner voice that has my best interests at heart.*
February 29

“It is important to acknowledge and pay attention to our feelings, as they alert us when something needs to be addressed.” *Eating Disorders Anonymous*, p. 188

In EDA, I learned that my disordered behaviors were misguided attempts to escape from feelings. In the early days, I assumed almost every difficult emotion was my eating disorder’s voice. Through recovery, I learned to embrace and accept the range of human emotions I experience, from the wonderful to the difficult. As I learned how to navigate these, my life gradually became authentic and full of joy.

At first, I practiced pausing and redirecting my thoughts whenever my eating disorder tried to divert my focus away from an underlying problem. Next, I needed to identify and name my feelings. Then I took care of unmet needs if I was hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or ashamed. I talked or wrote about other strong emotions to get perspective. If the feelings persisted, or if I was unsure what to do next, I did service or prayed instead of over-focusing on myself. The work was tough, but I learned to cope with difficult feelings. This enabled me to experience life’s more positive emotions, including love and delight, and freed me from my eating disorder.

*When I face my issues, difficult feelings pass, and positive feelings grow.*
Reflections on Recovery

March 1

“Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood God.*” *EDA Big Book*, p. 124

Step Three was easy for me to take because I came into EDA feeling a great deal of love and trust in God. The program cleared up my confusion about why God wasn’t answering my prayers to be healed from my eating disorder. It turned out that there were coping skills I was lacking. Working the Steps of EDA helped me develop and practice the attitudes and actions I’d been missing.

For example, it had always been easy for me to thank God for the good things in life, but appreciating and accepting unpleasantness presented much more of a challenge. A sponsor suggested the following prayer: “God, I don’t like it, I don’t want it, it’s not what I would’ve chosen, but I’m willing to believe you know something I don’t.” To me, that’s what Step Three is about: accepting life on life’s terms, and turning to God for the strength to face difficulties. Ups and downs are not only inevitable, they’re guaranteed.

*There are two things I know for sure regarding God’s will: God brought me to EDA, and taking Step Three requires me to work the remaining Steps.*
March 2

“We wanted the kind of recovery that looked and felt like real freedom. This is where Step Three came in.” EDA Big Book, p. 124

What is *not* real freedom? Here are a few examples from my past: counting minutes until my next meal, feeling deprived, intense shame about not following my food plan, and comparing myself to others who were “doing better” than I was at the time.

Today, real freedom is being aware: noticing when I am hungry and full, and recognizing the difference between emotional and physical hunger. It’s choosing to address these in a mature way, knowing I won’t always be right. Real freedom is accepting my body and life, appreciating things as they are, knowing there is much beyond me that is worth my time and attention.

Every day, in Step Three, I dedicate my life to serve my higher purpose. This decision brings much relief from frustration, deprivation, shame, and fear. My focus is on preparing myself to be of maximum service to the world around me. I love spending time on what matters. I laugh and find delight in everyone, including myself.

*Relying on my higher purpose frees me of self-centered fear so I can focus on what really matters.*

Submission 083
Reflections on Recovery

March 3

“ Tradition Three: The only requirement for EDA membership is a desire to recover from an eating disorder.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 487

The founding members of EDA were concerned that their approach to recovery might not work for all types of eating disorders. Imagine their relief when EDA members with every form of ED, including those with no specific diagnosis, began to develop a new perspective and walk free. The lesson was clear: we EDA members have found a common solution!

I’m grateful that when I came to EDA, I was warmly welcomed. Members focused on our common solution and didn’t worry about the differences between us. They reached out to me and let me know they had been where I was. This gave me hope and helped me be honest. When I realized no one wanted anything from me, I quickly began building trust with myself and others.

Being new to EDA can feel so strange! Face-to-face meetings can be terrifying. Phone and online meetings can feel awkward. When I was new, I didn’t know group etiquette and was so glad that someone talked with me after the meeting to explain the nuances. That’s why it’s important for me now to help newcomers learn how EDA works.

*Let me extend a welcoming hand to everyone who comes to EDA.*
March 4

“We are accountable and transparent. We communicate our intentions and follow through on what we commit to do. We take care of our own basic needs. If we fall short, we own up to it and try to set matters right.” The Twelve Traditions of EDA\textsuperscript{4}, p. 68

I used to think accountability was just being honest about whether I was engaging in my eating disorder, but it is much more than that. It means taking responsibility for myself, addressing my emotional needs appropriately, and making commitments that I can keep. It means communicating what I plan to do and asking for feedback before acting when others are involved. It doesn’t mean overcommunicating details of what I ate or didn’t eat.

I am accountable to my spouse when I review plans for the week, ensuring we have time for each other. I am accountable to myself when I “bookend” difficult situations by making before- and-after calls to a trusted confidant, and check in with myself regularly about my emotional needs.

*The more I demonstrate accountability, the more pleasant I am to be around for everyone, myself included!*

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Reflections on Recovery

March 5

“When we become willing to look at our issues and attitudes (a daily 10th Step practice) and look for ways to leverage our experience, training, time, talent, and energy to serve a higher purpose (a daily 11th Step reflection), our recovery gradually becomes more resilient.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 92

When I was in my eating disorder, I was regularly overwhelmed. I was disconnected from my authentic self and from any form of God. I didn’t trust anyone and saw no point in working the Steps, but I found a sponsor and gradually adopted a daily 10th and 11th Step practice.

In my daily inventory, I noticed that I often looked to my spouse to validate my thinking and behavior instead of relying on my internal sense of what was right. This left me vulnerable and hurt our relationship. I started seeking validation through prayer and meditation rather than from my spouse. As a result, I can now ask for and accept honest feedback without feeling hurt. All my relationships have grown stronger.

When I look at my issues and attitudes, and process emotions instead of suppressing them, I am more confident and self-assured. I like how this feels!

*Turning to God and my higher purpose for direction gives me power and resilience to walk away from my eating disorder.*
March 6

“When a newcomer shows up at an EDA meeting, we hope the experience is warm and welcoming. We hope each newcomer and each EDA member leaves feeling safe, supported, and inspired.” *EDA 12 Traditions* Draft

When I started going to EDA meetings online, I kept my camera off and didn’t share. I was afraid to be vulnerable if I let people know me. When I finally started sharing, I complained about my body and my problems until I went over the time limit. I was so embarrassed!

I gradually noticed that EDA members listened attentively, then talked about solutions, not only their problems. I gradually started doing that and also claiming milestones for trying to do the right things. I started turning my camera on, because the smiling faces made me feel warm inside, and I wanted to share that warmth with others. These were big changes for me!

I am grateful for the people who reached out and encouraged me to keep coming back, and to my Higher Power for giving me courage to return. Nowadays, I volunteer to be of service because I have great compassion and patience for new members who are like I used to be.

*I reach out to newer members, remembering that we were all there once.*

Submission 329
Reflections on Recovery

March 7

“… ‘God’ in EDA literature can mean the Deity, a deity, a spiritual entity of one’s own understanding (a Higher Power), or a non-spiritual conception (a higher purpose), and we remember that reliance on any one of these ideas can provide the perspective we need to find balance, peace, and freedom.” EDA Big Book, p. 193

Sometimes I react with fear and rage at life’s challenges, justifying my reactions by the intensity and impact of the situation. Working the Steps helps me regain my perspective and balance.

Step 1 tells me that my life is unmanageable, and for me, fear and rage are part of that unmanageability. Step 2 reminds me that a Higher Power or higher purpose will restore me to sanity. For Step 3, I take the next right action, following my Higher Power or higher purpose, then trust that I will be okay even if I don’t get my way.

When I rely on my Higher Power or higher purpose, I can breathe again. My perspective changes, and new solutions occur to me. I know my balance is restored when the next time something seems to go “wrong,” I pause, say the Serenity Prayer, see the bigger picture, and respond with open-heartedness.

Turning toward my Higher Power or higher purpose frees me to breathe again.

Submission 333
March 8

“As we learned to listen to ourselves with interest and compassion instead of judgment and fear, our trust grew. We found gratitude and respect for our minds and our bodies, regardless of how well we met our own or others’ initial expectations.” EDA Body Acceptance (brochure)

As a child, I felt unlovable, unheard, and burdensome to my family and everyone around me. In response, I turned to restricting food. I tried to decrease my body size in an attempt to numb and protect myself from fear, judgment, and shame. Recurring, self-destructive thinking patterns kept me stuck in my eating disorder into adulthood.

In recovery, I learned that perfectionism, rigid discipline, and thinness never protected me from life’s challenges or improved my self-worth. To heal my relationship with food, my body, and myself, I had to begin showing up for myself with interest and compassion. That meant letting go of unrealistic expectations of myself. It meant choosing to meet my basic needs, put my recovery first, and be kind to myself—no matter how much fear, shame, or judgment I felt. The more I showed myself kindness and care, the more I learned to cope and to trust the process of recovery.

I build trust and learn to love myself by practicing self-care and being proactive in my recovery, no matter what.

Submission 112
Reflections on Recovery

March 9

“The more ‘attractive’ I strived to be on the outside, the uglier and more unattractive I became on the inside.” EDA Big Book p. 326

My eating disorder tried to convince me that my outside was the most important part of me. It told me that if I just looked "better," I would feel safe enough to engage with the world and be worthy of love and connection. In reality, my life actually got smaller as a result. This was because I became more rigid and self-centered to maintain my outward appearance, which made me more isolated and less lovable.

Today I call out my eating disorder’s lies. I focus on the part of me that truly does matter. I organize my life around the things that truly make me beautiful: my love for my family and friends, and my connection with my Higher Power. Today, the qualities that truly make me proud of who I am are my values, morals, creativity, sensitivity, and compassion for those around me.

Today I am mindful of whether my actions on the outside match the person I want to be on the inside.

Submission 435
March 10

“[W]hen we let go of fighting with our bodies, we make space for play, love, and joy. We cultivate gratitude for our bodies and all they do for us, claiming and embracing them as they are.”

*EDA Body Acceptance* (brochure)

After being in recovery for a while, I discovered a passion and aptitude for a sport for the first time. The thrill of what my body could do helped me let go of body image obsession.

But a few years later, after multiple injuries, I learned my foot bones aren’t shaped right for the sport I loved. I had accepted my appearance, but how could I accept that my body can’t do what I want it to do?

I had to find ways to appreciate my body that didn’t depend on its appearance or performance. Slowly I discovered that I’m grateful for delicious sensations, like a massage or jumping into a cool pool on a hot day. I’m grateful for the ability to talk with friends, see autumn leaves, and hear hope at a meeting. I’m grateful for good tastes and smells. I now treasure this body, because I realize that it allows me to hug my children and experience love in my heart.

*I cultivate gratitude for my amazing body, with the limitations and strengths it has today.*
Reflections on Recovery

March 11

“We can get through anything, one thing at a time, if we keep in mind that weathering today’s experiences without resorting to old patterns will put us in a position to be helpful to others who may face the same issues later on.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 197

Steps 10, 11, and 12 showed me that I didn’t need to rely on my eating disorder during challenging times.

In Step Ten I learned to check in with myself, detangle my emotions, and feel them. Taking a daily inventory helped me gain the clarity and perspective I needed to act differently, whether that meant taking care of unmet needs, apologizing to someone, or getting honest about my anger, fear, or loneliness.

In Step Eleven, I learned to establish conscious contact with a Power greater than myself. The more I talked and prayed to this Power, the more guidance I received. The more I slowed down to quiet my mind and meditate, the better I could hear It. I felt this Power flow through me in Step Twelve, which enabled me to start carrying the message of recovery and be helpful to others.

*Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve are the most powerful tools in my life. Today, I can trust and rely on them no matter what I’m going through.*
March 12

“Even if you are in the middle of a relapse right now, you can choose recovery with the turn of this page. As they say in Twelve-Step meetings, ‘Do the next right thing.’ This beautiful book will show you how.” *EDA Big Book*, p. xxxvi

To find balance, I had to abandon my attempts at abstinence, which always ended in failure. I couldn’t understand how to surrender and let go of my eating disorder.

An EDA member suggested that instead of focusing on my lapses into eating disordered patterns, I could try doing the next right thing immediately after engaging in old behaviors. When they flared up, I started asking myself, “What aspect of balance do I need more of?” Then I went through the list—physical, mental/intellectual, emotional/social, and spiritual/purpose-oriented—until an idea popped up for some small action that I could take. Sometimes the action was as simple as relaxing my shoulders, focusing on my job, or making my bed.

It was such a relief to stop beating myself up! Turning my focus to doing the next right thing revolutionized my thinking. Slowly, steadily, my behaviors changed, too. Before I knew it, I was free!

*Freedom comes when I take the next right action to cultivate balance.*
Reflections on Recovery

March 13

“...I have found there to be two common denominators in those who do recover: truth and trust.” EDA Big Book, p. xxxviii

Building trust with myself used to seem impossible. Each day I woke up and thought, “Today I am going to be perfect,” but it was never long before I’d failed to meet one or another unrealistic expectation. I thought I would never earn self-trust.

In EDA, I learned that not being trustworthy with my own basic physical and emotional needs meant I was abandoning myself. At first, I was shocked and unhappy, but the truth helped me find solid ground.

I now see that the harder I work to understand and address my physical and emotional needs, the more realistic I can be. I no longer expect myself to be perfect at anything. Instead, I now expect myself to reflect and learn from my mistakes, so I can develop the life and relationship skills I didn’t know I needed. Pushing myself to do what is needed is uncomfortable. I don’t always get it right, but allowing myself to make mistakes without abandoning myself led me to build self-trust and finally find peace.

I work at earning self-trust every day by being truthful about what I need and can handle.

Submission 342
March 14

“Recovery took root once I started focusing on what was going right.” *EDA Fully Recovered* (brochure)

Attempting to see what I'm doing right has been an important part of my recovery process. When I was stuck in my disease it seemed all I ever felt was despair. The horrid emotional aftermath of my eating disordered behaviors just kept the vicious cycle in motion: feeling bad, using behaviors to make the feelings go away, then feeling worse.

Hearing about milestones in meetings helped me realize that even just being at the meeting was an action taken toward healing. I claimed it as a milestone, and people in the meeting cheered me on. Once I got started, it got easier to find milestones. I started cheering myself on. The more I cheered, the more hopeful I became about everything. I began appreciating life more and feeling less miserable.

These days, I still work at noticing positive aspects about myself that have nothing to do with food or weight and claim these as milestones. Little changes in the way I view myself and others add up! Much to my surprise, I don’t spend a lot of time running from my emotions anymore.

*Recovery takes work, but I feel good about myself because I make the effort.*

Submission 350
Reflections on Recovery

March 15

“...letting go of the old rules that created a certainty of failure; and being willing to face and work with the unknown, a step at a time, until it becomes the known.” *EDA Big Book*, p. xxv

For a long time, I didn’t give up my eating disorder because I wanted a guarantee that recovery would be worth the effort before I committed to it. I learned that I couldn’t *know*; I had to *trust*—in a Higher Power, the program, and my sponsor. Though afraid of the unknown, I *was* tired of being miserable.

I slowly became willing to do some things differently. I let go of the perfectionism that kept me feeling like a failure, and chose to struggle toward recovery instead. It helped to know that others also struggled to adopt recovery tools and practices that they were not sure would work. Together we made small changes that felt like huge leaps of faith.

Working the Steps took even more faith and trust that I would be safe through the vulnerable process of self-discovery. Then I discovered that my Higher Power was there all along! The more I took leaps of faith, the more my trust grew, and the more I recovered.

*Trust starts with taking small, incremental risks. Then the unknown becomes known through practice and experience.*
March 16

“Once we have begun incorporating Step Ten into our daily life, we gradually begin to realize we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even our eating disorders.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 191

I had written 10th Step inventories for years in another Twelve Step program, but full recovery eluded me until I stopped focusing on numbers. Today, I still write about my challenging emotions, how these affected me, my part in causing them, and actions I can take to resolve them. Now, however, my inventory no longer includes obsessive lists of what I've eaten, exercises I've done, and program tools I've used. I no longer weaponize inventories in a daily fight against myself and my body!

What gave me the courage to stop fighting my body is the focus in EDA meetings on balance and milestones rather than abstinence and numbers. I stopped counting steps, obeying food rules, and weighing anything. These days, my inventories include things I’ve done right and gratitude. Yes, my body changed a bit, but it eventually stabilized. When I stopped fighting my body, I developed a profound appreciation for it. When I accepted my body’s changes, my eating disorder stopped dominating my thinking and behavior.

*I inventory my issues, milestones, and gratitude, and live at peace with my mind and body.*
Reflections on Recovery

March 17

“Pain helps us recognize when and where something needs to shift, and enables us to connect empathetically with others. Bringing our pain out into the open so we can address underlying thinking takes great courage.” EDA Body Acceptance (brochure)

From loss and sorrow to anger and rejection, I used my eating disorder to run away from pain—until it stopped working. Recovery taught me that pain doesn’t have to be some dreadful thing to deny or suppress. Pain casts light on areas of my life in need of care and attention, and EDA has given me a process to bring them into balance.

First, I tend to my basic needs, which are often as simple as showering, eating, or resting. Next, I meditate and write in my journal to help identify and slow down the unmanageable thoughts running through my head. Then, I get honest and share with my sponsor or another EDA member. Again and again I’ve used these suggestions and tools of recovery in response to painful emotions and experiences. Doing so takes more courage than staying stuck in my eating disorder. But, in return, I gain relief from the pain and insights that help me resolve the situations that cause it.

Pain has meaning when I listen to it and bring it into balance instead of running from it.

Submission 113
March 18

“As awesome as early recovery was for me, I knew right away that maintaining recovery would require sustained daily effort.”

EDA Big Book, p.248

My eating disorder thrived on controlling, fear-driven, self-centered thinking. When I shifted focus to doing “the next right thing”, my eating disordered behaviors occurred less frequently. The “next right thing” is anything that restores my balance, like getting to bed a little earlier or writing a 10th Step inventory. When I’m not sure what to do, I ask a fellow or my Higher Power for help. This is simple but not always easy! Yet, one day at a time, taking small, next right actions changed how I felt about my life and myself.

While recovery requires dedication, it also involves what I call “daily allowing.” I must allow myself to return to love and kindness every day. When I let go of what I can’t control and rely on my Higher Power, I find clarity and serenity. The less I strain to meet unrealistic expectations, the more I experience a life beyond my wildest dreams. I feel mature because I set realistic goals, and I’m delighted by how often I achieve them!

When I’m struggling, I practice allowing myself to be where I am and take small, next right actions that help me feel better.
Reflections on Recovery

March 19

“But when life gets to be a tough slog, I take the time to write about each issue specifically: the source of the disturbance, the cause, what it affects or threatens, my part in the situation (my errors in thinking), and my resolution (what I am willing to do about it that day).” *EDA Big Book*, p. 498

My eating-disordered life was full of resolutions—New Year's resolutions, Monday resolutions, resolutions to change my body before a big event. These always failed with the next swing of my eating disorder's pendulum. I appreciate the fact that “resolution” has a very different meaning in EDA: an attitude adjustment or action that I identify in my 4th or 10th Step inventory to address a situation that is causing problematic emotions.

I think of my EDA resolutions as “amending actions”—how I’ll mend a broken situation. Sometimes my amending actions include an apology. Almost always they involve shifts (sometimes large, sometimes small) in how I treat myself or those closest to me. When the problem is simply an emotion that I need to accept and experience, my amending action is a prayer to whatever Higher Power there is to help me breathe through it and trust that it will pass.

*Identifying sane resolutions brings freedom from overwhelming emotions.*
March 20

“When recovery entails dealing with food, something we need almost as much as air and water, any rigid approach to food-related behaviors—including thinking of food as ‘an addiction’—simply did not work for us.” *EDA Big Book* p. xi

Despite success in other Twelve-Step fellowships, I continued to struggle with overeating. I did not understand that focusing on “abstinence” meant that I was constantly fighting with myself about food. Then, someone sent me an article about why abstinence does not work and mentioned EDA. I will always be grateful to my Higher Power for leading me to hear the truth.

In EDA, I began to understand why restricting, failing, starting over, and trying to “get it right this time” just didn’t work. I was trapped in a downward spiral. EDA’s Twelve Steps helped me to see my all-or-nothing thinking and perfectionism, and to realize I could not trust them to keep me safe.

EDA’s focus on the solution empowers me to do things I never thought I could do. Today, by identifying myself as “a person in recovery from an eating disorder,” I stay grounded and focused on what I can do that helps myself and others.

*I understand that I will never be “perfect” at anything, and that “being perfect” misses the point. Being useful is my goal today.*

Submission 439
Reflections on Recovery

March 21

“Stories in recovery also involve… writing our own non-fiction story and being willing to rewrite our old ‘perfect’ ending with the ‘perfect’ body, finding instead one we can sustain and that can sustain us: our own groove.” EDA Big Book, p. xxv

My higher purpose motivates me to stay on track when my thoughts begin to veer toward changing my body. When I start obsessing about this, I remember that God gave me this body so that I can be of useful service to others. I can’t adequately sponsor or help others—inside or outside of EDA—if I don’t accept and nourish my body. When my eating disorder tells me to restrict, I remind myself that I feed my body for the greater good, and I accept it exactly as it is, without exception.

At first, this felt like I was sacrificing the body I wanted for the mindset and freedom I needed. But a day came when it no longer felt like a sacrifice! My body didn’t betray me when I fed it. I discovered that my body is much smarter than I thought it was. Now I can share experience, strength, and hope with others from a recovered perspective.

*May I be the inspiration for body acceptance that I seek in meetings.*

Submission 397
March 22

“As long as we are earnest about growing stronger so we can better serve our higher purpose, any [higher purpose] will do.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 121-122

When I was fresh out of residential treatment and starting to work the Steps in EDA, I learned that a dear friend had terminal cancer. The news was too heart-wrenching to bear. I started to obsess over every bite I ate and step I took, until I could no longer maintain mental, emotional, and spiritual space for my friend.

I reached out to a fellow EDA member, who helped me understand and accept the reality of the situation. I couldn’t cure cancer or change my friend’s diagnosis. To avoid that helpless feeling, I had turned back to my eating disorder’s false sense of safety. My body was not the issue, and no amount of restriction would relieve my pain and suffering.

I needed to take care of myself so that I could be there for my friend. With every bite I ate and Step I took, I thought of how I wanted to show up as a source of joy and support for them. Helping my friend feel loved through the end of their life actually saved my life.

*I can surrender the eating disorder when I keep my higher purpose in mind.*
Reflections on Recovery

March 23

“I soon learned the behaviors and obsession of my eating disorder were symptoms of similar challenges going on in my life: depression, family turmoil, low self worth and self-esteem, relationship grief, perfectionism, and dependence upon external validation. I used these behaviors to cope with whatever I was struggling with internally.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 343

Before I recovered, I didn’t understand that my eating disorder was a mechanism that helped me deal with my life issues. It took time to develop the skills I’d not known were lacking, and even longer before I began to rely on these new skills. It was helpful hearing how others surf the waves of living life on life’s terms without drowning. I’ve found it gets easier, and I’m becoming more accustomed to sitting in emotional discomfort long enough to see what I need to do.

I’m discovering it’s not realistic to demand ease and comfort from life 24/7 or to check out when I don’t like what I’m feeling. I no longer expect to have what I imagined to be perfect recovery. In fact, discomfort teaches me to build reasonable boundaries, take care of myself, and trust in my Higher Power to get me through what seems impossible and unbearable.

*Moments of difficulty are learning experiences; may I use them wisely!*

Submission 122
March 24

“...I’ve learned to be gentle with myself and make sure I address the underlying emotional issues by working my 10th Step.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 494

Putting words on paper is powerful and freeing. Journaling exposes my most tender, painful places, inviting guidance and direction from an authentic inner voice of compassion and reason. I barely knew this inner voice existed when I first started in EDA.

When I write, I find it much easier to be objective about my circumstances, relationships, and opportunities. Objectivity helps me find a way through the heavy emotions that can muddle my thinking. When I write my 10th Step inventory, I release some of the emotional baggage that keeps me stuck without diminishing the motivation to change what needs changing. I then commit to make these changes, and share my planned resolutions with others to hold myself accountable. Addressing my emotions helps me build trust with myself and others.

EDA’s inventory process includes writing about what I am doing right every day. Reflecting on the good, kind, purposeful, fun, relaxing, and loving actions and attitudes I’ve taken brings me gratitude and joy.

*On this day, I commit to writing a single paragraph about the last 24 hours. I will be honest. I will find something for which to be grateful.*
Reflections on Recovery

March 25

“When we started EDA, we discovered it was going to be about finding balance and perspective, not abstinence, in the midst of life. That takes time and patience; it is not going to come together all at once.”  EDA Big Book, p. 62

There are no quick fixes in life. I didn’t get ill overnight, so I certainly can’t expect to get well in a flash either! Accepting that recovery takes time and effort, and that it can take even longer for behaviors to finally end, helps me maintain balance and perspective. I understand the need to take a balanced and patient approach, so I take small steps in the right direction. I’m typically impatient and lack the sense of moderation that others may take for granted. I still often demand, “All or nothing, now or never!”

EDA has helped me calm down, accept and address the causes of my impulsivity, and respond with more compassion to myself and others. I am a better-adjusted and happier person because I am more flexible, open-minded, appreciative, and deliberate. Today, I slow my pace, take deeper breaths, and step back so I can see and enjoy the deep and beautiful patterns in the life I am weaving.

I look back at the distance I’ve covered and appreciate how far I’ve come.
March 26

“Next is Step Eleven, which calls me to spend time dedicated to prayer and time in meditation every day. It is very noticeable to me when I skip this Step.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 477–478

When I reached Step Eleven, I needed help learning *how* to meditate. I took a meditation class, read outside literature about meditation, and tried guided meditations. Eventually, I found a type of meditation that works for me: I practice mindfulness of my breath, body sensations, and emotions.

When I meditate, I notice my breathing and sensations such as hunger and fullness, anxious tension, angry heat, waves of grief, and constricting fear. Sitting still and practicing non-judgmental awareness of these sensations has been powerful in unexpected ways. My reactions are slowing down, which means I’m more likely to pause before saying something I will regret, so I owe fewer amends. It’s getting easier to know when I’m truly hungry and when I’m moderately full.

Getting in touch with these sensations has opened a rich inner world. Difficult emotions don’t kill me. By learning to sit with them for one minute, I gained the confidence to try sitting with them for two. Now I know I can handle whatever emotions come up in real life.

*Non-judgmental awareness is a power that restores me to sanity.*

Submission 443
Reflections on Recovery

March 27

“As with food and sex, physical exercise was another area where many of us went to extremes, either through avoidance or by overdoing it to the point of damaging our bodies and our relationships with others. In recovery, we need to be ever mindful of balance and moderation.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 151

After years of exercising to the point of exhaustion and depletion, I now lovingly take care of my body with mindful movement. I no longer buy into the “no pain, no gain” mentality, and I don’t use exercise to compensate for nutrition, which I used to think I didn’t deserve. For me, movement has nothing to do with weight or “being good.”

I now move my body with self-love, without an external goal. Instead, my goal is to inhabit my body fully, *from the inside*. I notice whether the movement feels enjoyable, pleasurable, or refreshing. When I engage in movement mindfully, it enhances my mind–body connection. Moving in this way alleviates my physical and mental stress, makes me stronger, gives me energy, and empowers me. I feel so good when I take time and space to explore moving my body in a balanced, playful way.

*I do not need to change my body’s shape or size in any way. May I move mindfully and lovingly today.*

Submission 186
March 28

“Therefore, since food and weight are not the real issues, no amount of bingeing, purging, or restricting will solve or change anything.” *EDA Big Book*, p. xxvii

Step One required me to admit powerlessness over all my eating disordered behavior, including the parts I thought I wanted to keep or needed to feel safe. In an abstinence-based program, I had failed over and over after periods of “being good.” At first, I just wanted EDA to help me live peacefully on my restrictive diet!

Writing about Step One helped me realize that I thought I needed restrictive behaviors to feel “safe.” I eventually accepted that these behaviors were rigid and disordered, just like my binge eating. In fact, not getting consistent nutrition constantly set me up for unbearable cravings that led to awful binges, despair, self-loathing, and cruel self-criticism. I finally got clarity: *all* of these behaviors and many of my thinking patterns were part of my disorder. When I realized this, I was able to move on to Step Two and accept help from wherever I could get it. Because I wanted peace, I was willing to let go of my old beliefs.

*To recover, I let go of all my eating disordered thinking and behaviors, even the parts that I sometimes wanted to keep.*
Reflections on Recovery

March 29

“We hope you will find something here that you can use and that you may find opportunity to share your experience with still others, for such work brings calm and freedom from despair when all other measures fail.” EDA Suggested Meeting Readings, More on Eating Disorders

I do service in EDA because it helps me so much. When I was new, clapping for others’ milestones and thinking of my own milestones to share gave me hope that I could recover. Later, chairing meetings and doing other service for groups helped me take responsibility for my recovery and make new friends. During a long period when I felt better in some ways but still struggled with eating disordered behavior, service commitments helped me show up for meetings where I would always hear something that pulled me out of despair and confusion. Reaching out to newcomers, answering their questions, and sharing my recovery journey helped me see that I’d come farther than I’d realized.

I started sponsoring when I reached Step Twelve, even though I didn’t feel like I was “done” recovering. Now, working with sponsees reminds me of what works for me, and they often say things that inspire me.

After taking care of my basic needs, I turn my attention to how I can be of service.
March 30

“Recovery has not been an easy or smooth road. I relapsed many times after that first EDA meeting. Looking back, I can say that early on I was unwilling to completely surrender my body size and shape over to the care of my Higher Power. I still didn’t trust that I was essentially, irrevocably loveable—no matter my body fat percentage or the size of my pants.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 355

The turning point in my recovery was when I decided to properly clothe myself, no matter how large my body became. Although I had begun working the Steps, I still struggled with bingeing and was terrified it would never stop.

EDA taught me to build trust with myself by taking care of my basic needs. This includes buying and wearing clothes that fit. So I went shopping and bought a couple of outfits I could wear comfortably. I felt so much better!

This was the first of many small actions I took to build trust with myself. I also stopped beating myself up when I binged, since this was not at all helpful. Over time, I stopped beating myself up altogether, and the binges stopped completely. Surprisingly, being compassionate toward myself opened the door to full recovery.

*I build trust with myself and my body by wearing clothes that fit.*
Reflections on Recovery

March 31

“Now that we are asked to forgive people who hurt us, we consider that perhaps they, too, were swept away by tides of emotion and patterns of thought and behavior that they could not seem to control.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 181

Whenever someone’s actions or attitudes hurt me, the best I can do at first is to recognize I’m angry. Later, when I take stock of my own actions and attitudes, I can see my part in most situations. Perhaps I made assumptions that weren’t true, made an inconsiderate statement, or didn’t communicate important information. When I see my part—however large or small—it gives me choices about how to think, move forward, and improve the situation or relationship.

When working Step Eight, I try to see each situation from the other person’s perspective. I remember that the person who hurt me may be fighting inner battles that I know nothing about. Empathy usually surfaces, and compassion brings me peace.

Relying on my Higher Power gives me the courage to look at life differently. Seeking counsel from more experienced EDA members, I hear solutions I would not realize by myself. I learn from those who manage to live peacefully amid challenging situations.

*Looking at situations from other points of view gives me empathy, acceptance, and forgiveness.*
April 1

“The purpose of Step Four is to help us find, and prepare us to let go of, everything that has been keeping us from being able to handle life on life’s terms with dignity and grace.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 132

At first, writing my 4th Step inventory seemed daunting and exhausting. I was overwhelmed by the buried fears, lies, selfishness, and catastrophic thinking that drove my eating disorder. I needed a lens that would allow me to objectively uncover the truth about myself without overwhelming me with shame.

Eventually I realized that I could recover if I practiced radical acceptance along with radical honesty, so I focused this new lens on my shortcomings. I soon discovered that I became angry because people didn’t do what I wanted and because I entertained ridiculous untruths, e.g., “If I get angry, my husband will leave me” or “I can’t be happy until my body changes.” Instead of beating myself up for this, I committed to accepting myself—no matter what—while working the rest of the Steps.

Accepting myself enabled me to change! I began to accept responsibility for my thinking patterns, and I gained the ability to respond differently. Radical acceptance and kindness toward myself have made recovery much easier.

*May my mind open to new ways of being.*

Submission 393
Reflections on Recovery

April 2

“We remind ourselves that our purpose in Step Four is to find what has been causing our emotional disturbances, so we can use our new frame of reference to define a sane response or resolution to life’s inevitable challenges.” EDA Big Book, p. 137

As a veteran of other 12 Step programs, I was very familiar with the four-column approach to the 4th Step inventory, but discovering the fifth column (outlining my resolutions to areas of difficulty) in EDA has been mind-opening and empowering.

When I first started working on the Resolution column, I often found myself caught up in the same heavy emotions that upset me in the first place. I am grateful to my sponsor for asking, “Where is your Higher Power in your resolution?” I am grateful I can now pray and meditate. I can choose a spiritual resolution, such as praying for the success and joy of those with whom I find myself in conflict, or I can ask myself what my inner wisdom suggests. My resolutions now restore integrity, and allow me to proceed calmly and with dignity.

Praying and meditating when seeking resolutions to my issues helps me respond to life sanely and in ways that align with my higher self and Higher Power.

Submission 291
April 3

“Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or EDA as a whole.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 487

In EDA, we understand the importance of singleness of purpose—that finding and sustaining recovery from our eating disorders is our primary focus. Yet I wanted EDA groups to be free to do whatever they thought best to carry a message of recovery, with only the minimum of rules and guidelines.

That changed when I heard about an EDA group that required people to be abstinent from their eating disordered behaviors before they were allowed to speak. This group’s “abstinence first” policy and use of abstinence-based literature had the potential to harm EDA as a whole. Hearing that EDA is an abstinence-based program, confused newcomers might abandon EDA altogether. The group’s policy undermined a fundamental EDA principle—that cessation of eating disordered behaviors is a side effect of building trust with ourselves.

Thankfully, concerned members brought this problem to the attention of the group. Before long, the group conscience affirmed the Traditions and adopted EDA literature and practices. I now see the importance of balancing group autonomy with following guidelines that protect all of EDA.

*When voting within my EDA group, I consider what is best for EDA as a whole.*

Submission 378
Reflections on Recovery

April 4

“We set an example of **love**: we aim to be empathetic. We listen attentively. We do not minimize anyone’s difficulties. We know that everyone endures pain. We don’t try to fix anyone. Instead, we are supportive of one another. We do not dominate conversations.” *The Twelve Traditions of EDA*\(^5\), p. 68-69

In early recovery, I delighted in acting quickly to solve problems and got a lot of positive attention for this. Years later, after an adult child disowned me, I realized how acting without checking to see how others feel is inconsiderate—it is not respectful and doesn’t feel like love.

These days, I try to go slowly, communicating my intentions and asking for feedback before acting when others are impacted. When facing difficult conversations, I ask trusted friends for ideas and think about whether what I say is necessary, true, and kind. I think about whether my actions empower those I care about and—after my needs are met—I try to place their priorities ahead of my own.

*May I listen more than I speak, and when I speak, may my words be respectful, kind, and true.*

Submission 403

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April 5

“The hardest part about recovery has been learning to be comfortable with change. Life stops when we are immersed in our eating disorder, and to fully recover we have to realize change is inevitable—even desirable.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 433

Change has never been easy for me, yet I know that change is the only constant in life. When I resist change, I can’t be present for what is. When I am not present, I lose connection with my Higher Power. On the other hand, when I embrace change, my life flows better. I’ve found that living in the flow is much easier than living in resistance!

In recovery, I’m making the moment-to-moment choice to be present more often. When I am present with my thoughts and emotions, I am better prepared for interactions with myself and others. New ideas and different perspectives occur to me, and I realize I’ve connected with my Higher Power. I don’t try to prevent changes from happening through control, judgment, black-and-white thinking, or perfectionism. It’s not always easy to do this, but being present and open to change protects me from returning to old behaviors.

*I choose to be present in the here and now, so I can be open to change and connect with my Higher Power.*
Reflections on Recovery

April 9

“We are asked to consider our own part (errors in thinking) to define a better way to think about the situation, and to create a response or resolution.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 139

At first, I had a hard time seeing my part in emotionally disturbing situations, especially when I thought others were at fault. Although I started Step Four reluctantly, I quickly began to get helpful clarity. I started noticing when I reacted with anger because I was disappointed or overreacted based on false assumptions. I didn’t like my reactions, but noticing and analyzing them on paper enabled me to practice better responses.

For example, when a friend disappointed me, my inventory revealed I had unrealistic expectations that she would know my preferences without my telling her. So I adjusted my expectations and talked to her about my preferences. Writing about a resentment toward my boss showed me that I was assuming (falsely) that I had to quit if there were difficulties between us. I asked for more feedback instead, and we were soon on good terms again. In both cases, the resolutions I identified in my inventory left me feeling better about myself and empowered in my relationships.

*In Step 4, I uncover problematic patterns and search for sane solutions.*
April 20

“It is by letting go of attachment to our emotions that we find perspective.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 196

Steps Six and Seven gave me an opportunity to let go of broken tools and behaviors that left me resentful and miserable. My shortcomings were largely due to not taking responsibility for meeting my own basic needs. As a result, my natural instinct for self-preservation led me to do and say things that were clumsy, awkward, and sometimes extreme. My sponsor helped me identify ways to change this pattern, including practicing self-care, and remembering to pause, breathe, and think of my higher purpose before speaking. This helped me accept myself as an imperfect human being, getting better. The compassion, grace, and forgiveness for myself that came from working Steps Six and Seven led naturally to Step Eight.

As I practiced forgiveness for myself, I found I could extend it to others—even my mother, against whom I held many resentments. This year I was able to remember her without the bitterness I once had. When I let go of old hurts, I began to see my mother and myself as whole people. I am glad I am healing and finding love within me after so many years.

*I respect myself for letting go of old hurts and being willing to forgive.*
Reflections on Recovery

May 1

“Step Five: Admitted to God, ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” EDA Big Book, p. 159

When I first heard Step Five, it sounded horrible, like instructions to beat myself up and talk to a God that I didn’t believe in. Luckily, my interpretation has evolved!

First, I substitute my current definition of Higher Power for the word “God.” Right now, HP means inner wisdom to me, so the first part of Step Five simply means facing and accepting whatever is going on with me.

For the rest of Step Five, sharing my truth with a sponsor or trusted advisor became easier when I realized that the goal is not to tell them how bad and wrong I am. Instead, the goal is to articulate the “exact nature” of how my attitudes or actions stand in the way of my recovery, so that together we can come up with better ways to think and act. That’s a goal I can get behind! The love, acceptance, and wisdom that I’ve received from the members who have listened to my 5th Steps has been an unexpected bonus. When I’m on the other side, listening to another member’s 5th Step, I’m inspired by their courage and dedication to their recovery.

May I be honest with myself and others today.

Submission 372
May 2

“**Tradition Five:** Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message of recovery to others with eating disorders.”

*EDA Big Book, p. 487*

I love that EDA meetings mainly focus on solutions to the underlying issues rather than getting sidetracked by discussion of numbers, food, exercise, or outside issues. The attitudes and practices I learned in EDA saved my life! That’s why it’s crucial for the EDA message to be clear to everyone who attends our meetings.

One fundamental component of the EDA message is that I don’t have to be afraid of my eating disorder. I’d used it to avoid emotions, but I don’t run from them anymore because working the EDA Steps taught me how to use emotions to motivate myself to take action. I also learned to take care of basic needs first, then do whatever serves the greater good because this keeps me safe from drama. Focusing on balance keeps me out of shame. Milestones remind me to notice what I am doing right. Understanding that my anger is rooted in fear helps me be compassionate with myself. Sharing authentically with others about how I get through life’s difficulties gives me a sense of wholeness and joy.

*May I carry the EDA message of recovery as clearly and authentically as possible.*
Reflections on Recovery

May 3

“We build trust with ourselves and others: We do what we say or do our best and are honest about our limitations; We take small risks to develop trust with ourselves; We share struggles as well as milestones with others, which helps build connection and trust with others; We value our sense of humor and don’t take ourselves too seriously; We tell the truth even when it is uncomfortable.” The Twelve Traditions of EDA⁶, p. 69

My eating disorder was a form of self-abandonment; I couldn’t trust myself. I tried trusting in a Higher Power instead, but no amount of prayer or practice helped for long. In EDA, I discovered a different approach—taking small, deliberate steps to rebuild trust with myself and being patient with slow progress.

I struggled when my basic needs seemed to conflict. I needed emotional safety but found it agonizing to express myself. I needed financial stability but was terrified about working. I began to see humor in these contradictory truths, and this helped me tolerate significant discomfort as I slowly established a reasonable balance.

Humor helps me calm down, find my balance, and rebuild trust.

Submission 404

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May 11

“We who were once very alone, miserable, and hopeless are now happy, joyous, and free.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 69

There are many ups and downs in recovery. Most days I experience freedom from my eating disorder. Other days I struggle with difficult emotions, and sometimes they drag me down into old patterns of thought and behavior.

My stumbles in recovery do not define me. I am not my worst moments. Like others in EDA, I am persistent in facing my struggles and overcoming them. Instead of shaming myself or blaming others, I now take positive action, whether that’s taking care of my basic needs, writing a 10th Step inventory, or offering to help a fellow EDA member.

Every positive action that I take in recovery is like a bank deposit. The deposits slowly add up, and my eating disorder loses its hold as my life accumulates more joy and freedom. Just as important, when I’m having a hard day, I can now draw on that “money in the bank”—the trustworthy friends I’ve made in EDA, the lessons I’ve learned from my inventories, my experiences of how good it feels to take care of my basic needs. These recovery actions are the solid foundation of my recovery.

*I overcome my eating disorder by persistently and patiently taking positive action.*

Submission 023 Earmarked for May 11
Reflections on Recovery

June 1

“Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 168

I grew up in a household where feelings were frowned upon; only submissive obedience was allowed. I never understood my feelings and thought emotions were a foreign language I’d never learn to speak. Later, unacknowledged fear and rage fueled my eating disorder.

In EDA I learned that all feelings, including the “negative” ones, are natural and healthy. The problem arises when the feelings grow out of proportion. I discovered through my 4th Step inventory that the root of my shortcomings—the reason my feelings kept ballooning into problems—was my need to be the center of the universe without considering others.

Becoming willing to let go of this defect and shifting my focus from self to service has made all the difference. I became willing to have my Higher Power take away what no longer served me or others. Recovery transformed fear into caution and replaced rage with the desire for change. My inflated, problematic feelings became positive assets! Now I can focus on developing these and other assets by making myself useful.

*Becoming willing to let go of what I thought I needed opened me to receiving more than I could have dreamed of.*

Submission 389
June 2

“Tradition Six: An EDA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the EDA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 488

I used to think it was ok when I shared in EDA meetings to recommend other 12—Step fellowships and a specific treatment center that had helped me. EDA saved my life, but I thought it was important to tell my whole story.

My thinking on this evolved after I got feedback from other EDA members and reflected on how irritated I become when others recommend practices that I find useless or harmful. I now realize that there’s a big difference between mentioning treatment or other fellowships when telling my story—which is not a problem—and recommending these outside entities—which diverts attention from EDA’s core message. The other institutions or literature that helped me personally might be useful for some members but might distract or harm others. I am still honest when sharing my experience, strength, and hope, but I no longer promote other institutions, practices, or literature in EDA meetings.

*I focus on EDA processes and tools when sharing in meetings so that the program’s message about how to recover is as clear and consistent as possible.*

Submission 382
Reflections on Recovery

June 3

“We are humble—open-minded, flexible, and open to feedback and new ideas. We focus on personal growth and service to others rather than seeking admiration or praise for our actions. We respect everyone’s efforts. We strive not to judge anyone. We listen with love and attention rather than having to be heard.” The Twelve Traditions of EDA⁷, p. 69

I used to think humility was reserved for monks, Mother Teresa, and holy people—a quality to be respected and admired but not something that I could achieve.

Then, when I got to Steps Six and Seven, I began to realize that all my efforts to make things go my way—even when I had good intentions—were what stood between me and humility. Whenever I made my priorities more important than my friends’ goals, I failed at community-building. Whenever I made my children’s achievements more important than teaching them to trust their own common sense and values, I failed at parenting. So I began to turn my efforts toward helping others identify and achieve their goals. Voilà! I was developing humility!

I am happiest and at my best when empowering others.

Submission 405

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“Step Seven: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.”
EDA Big Book, p. 172

In my early recovery, I mistakenly thought that once I did the hard work of getting ready to have my shortcomings removed, then humbly asked God for help, they would miraculously disappear. I soon learned that my shortcomings were a natural result of not meeting my basic needs. In Step Seven, I had to learn to apply my emotions differently, using them to understand my needs and meet them, then unselfishly use the rest of my time, training, and energy to help with whatever needed to be done.

This seemed like a tall order! Luckily, EDA members who had learned how to do this told me how they did it. They focused on what was going right, practiced self-care, and engaged in character-building activities. They stopped allowing fear to drive them to numb themselves and turned to helping others. They stopped trying to control everything and everyone.

I tried these things, and they worked for me, too! It turned out that letting go of shortcomings required courage to ask for help and willingness to do my part. The evidence of how well this works still keeps me on track.

By letting go of my shortcomings, I gained clarity, courage, and self-respect.
Reflections on Recovery

July 2

“Tradition Seven: Every EDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 488

When we are adults and not impaired, we are responsible for paying our own way. It was important for my recovery that I start taking care of myself, instead of expecting others to support me. Taking care of myself contributed to my self-esteem and self-trust. It is the same with EDA groups. When we members take care of our EDA groups, our collective esteem and trust grow.

One of the groups I regularly attend was getting indirect financial support in the form of free rent from the treatment center where we held our meetings. We realized this wasn’t self-support and could lead to conflicts of interest, so we started paying the center the remainder of our 7th Tradition money after we covered our expenses, which included keeping EDA Big Books on hand. The director of the center appreciated our generosity, and we felt better about our integrity. Win-win!

Being fully self-supporting goes beyond money. At the group level, it means regular attendees rotate into service positions that support the group, such as bringing literature, greeting newcomers, and representing the group on the General Service Board.

*I feel useful and connected when I help with the work that keeps my group self-supporting.*
August 1

“Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 179

Making the list of people I had harmed was the easy part—I reviewed my 4th Step inventory and also asked myself who else I might have harmed. Becoming willing to make amends was much harder. Moving forward meant letting go of resentments, but for some people on my list, forgiveness seemed impossible. How could I forgive those who harmed me?

Eventually I realized that refusing to let go of old resentments kept me stuck. Justified anger was hurting *me*! The choice was between holding onto these feelings that blocked me from peace and serenity, or praying for the ability to move on.

If I wanted recovery, I had to change. The resentment prayer, and constant reminders that my sanity requires me to stop blaming others for my problems, helped me accept responsibility for moving on. After forgiving almost everyone and accepting that I also hurt people, I felt ready to offer restitution for the hurt I caused.

*I forgive others and let go of harms done to me because my recovery depends on it.*
Reflections on Recovery

August 2

“We made a list of people we had treated badly, no matter how they treated us. We accepted responsibility for our part and made an effort to forgive them for their part.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 180

Distressing emotions overwhelmed me when I first thought about Step Eight. My eating disorder served a purpose: it distracted me from my past, which was filled with trauma (mental, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse). I had a list of people whom I had treated badly, but what about how badly they had treated me?

I realized that I was powerless and unable to manage my thoughts and behaviors when I was in my eating disorder. Perhaps the people who had done me harm were also powerless over something and unable to manage their lives, too. I found empathy when I thought about the uncomfortable world that others were living in, when they had done me harm.

When willingness to make amends did not come easily, my sponsor suggested I pray for the welfare and peace of those against whom I still held bitterness. *Praying for people who harmed me helps me find forgiveness and gives me the peace I seek.*

Submission 408

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8 The long form of Step 8 is found on pages 180 and 484 of EDA’s Big Book.
August 3

“Tradition Eight: EDA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.” EDA Big Book, p. 488

When I first read this Tradition, I wasn’t impressed. What on earth did it mean by “service centers” and “special workers?” As I gained experience with our fellowship, the reason for the lack of specificity became clear. EDA’s General Service Board (GSB) might eventually need to staff an office (a.k.a. a service center). It might need to hire electricians, attorneys, or office managers (a.k.a. special workers). Tradition Eight ensures that the GSB can hire professional services when needed.

At the same time, it is important that the work I do in EDA—Step work for myself and service to support my sponsees and EDA groups—is not done in a professional capacity. I don’t pay my sponsor, and my sponsees don’t pay me. No one is paid to chair a meeting. Therapists who are EDA members don’t take clients as sponsees and don’t accept sponsees as clients. Good boundaries are important for everyone.

The reward for doing service and sharing my experience, strength, and hope with sponsees is that these activities keep me connected to my own recovery while sustaining our life-saving fellowship.

*Keeping sponsorship and group-level service non-professional keeps us focused on what matters most.*
Reflections on Recovery

August 10

“If willingness to make amends does not come easily, we suggest prayer. We pray for the health, success, and happiness of those to whom we need to make amends, even if it feels disingenuous at first. If we keep up this daily practice for a while, we may find we come to mean what we say.” Eating Disorders Anonymous, p. 181

I thought I was done with Step Eight after listing the people I harmed. But I still needed willingness for certain amends.

My sponsor suggested dividing my list into three groups. One was easy amends. The second required more courage or effort due to distance, needing to locate someone I’d lost touch with, or just feeling uncomfortable. The third was the “no, never!” group, to whom I wouldn’t ever apologize.

My sponsor instructed me to pray for those on my “no, never!” list. It took a while, but to my surprise, my heart opened! Forgiveness came as I asked myself if I’d ever done things like what they did to me. Generally, I could say yes. When I finally made each amend, I was clear and ready to turn the outcome over to my Higher Power. That’s when the 9th Step promises began coming true.

I pray for the well-being of those I resent until willingness and clarity come.
September 1

“Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”  
*EDA Big Book*, p. 182

To mend something means to repair it. With my sponsor’s guidance and support, I approached the people on my amends list with a willingness to repair relationships by focusing on *my* misbehavior, not theirs.

Whenever I could, I made *direct* amends, by admitting my errors explicitly. To do otherwise denied all of us a chance to heal.

Then, I made *living* amends by continuing to behave with integrity over time. This taught me the meaning of “actions speak louder than words.”

A few amends had to be *indirect* and required more creativity. For instance, when I could not find people from whom I had stolen money, I made donations to charities I thought they would value. When I owed an amend to my Grandma, who had died, I began visiting my Grandpa regularly, because I knew this would have pleased her.

Making amends to others freed me to make amends to myself, by actions such as buying clothes that fit and participating in social activities that I avoided in the past due to my eating disorder.

*Accepting responsibility and making restitution are stepping stones to a new freedom.*
Reflections on Recovery

September 2

“Tradition Nine: EDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 488-489

I marvel at how well EDA members and groups collaborate without formal organization or governance. This approach works because we share a common purpose and are committed to the idea of non-governance. We focus on principles on which we all agree, aiming to have as few rules as possible, with just enough centralized structure that groups can operate efficiently.

EDA groups elect GSB representatives (GSRs) to represent them on EDA’s General Service Board (GSB). The GSB and its committees serve the fellowship; they don’t govern. By maintaining the EDA website, creating and maintaining EDA literature, and helping EDA groups adopt best practices, the GSB supports EDA groups in carrying a clear and consistent message of how to recover from eating disorders.

I’ve served as a GSR and found it to be a delightful experience. GSRs and the GSB officers are friendly, collaborative, and committed to being of service. Sometimes the work I’ve done on committees has been daunting, but the experience has given me practice in clear, kind, and diplomatic communication, brings beautiful people into my life, and always inspires me.

*Humble service helps me be my best self.*

Submission 385
September 8

“We state what we would like to do to repair damages we caused. Although we cannot expect to get it, we ask forgiveness from the person we harmed. We ask if there is anything else that we can do to make amends and listen carefully to the response.”

*EDA Big Book*, p. 183

In my childhood, my parents always begged for forgiveness after abusing me. Then, as an adult with an eating disorder and low self-esteem, I constantly apologized to others, even when apologies weren’t necessary. Therefore, in early recovery, I was understandably skeptical of Step Nine!

My sponsor encouraged me to stop apologizing *just for being me*, which improved my self-esteem. She also suggested an amends formula that I follow when my behavior is hurtful: apologize simply and sincerely without groveling or repetition, say what I’ll do differently, then make it happen. It’s wonderful if the other person forgives me, but I don’t ask for this, since doing so feels like manipulating them into making me feel better about the harm I caused. Instead, I listen to whatever they have to say.

When I acknowledge that I’ve behaved badly, state how I will change, and listen to the other person, a weight lifts. A channel of love re-opens in my heart.

*I work Step Nine to repair my relationships.*
Reflections on Recovery

October 1

“Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.” *EDA Big Book*, p 186

Before EDA, writing a daily 10th Step inventory at the end of the day felt exhausting and pointless. I was already tired and emotionally hurting, and I didn’t want to do it!

EDA taught me a balanced, four-part process that takes me less than thirty minutes a day. I review the past twenty-four hours and plans for the day ahead. I look for what I did right and for anything upsetting. Second, I consider just one upsetting situation, looking for my own errors in thinking. I propose solutions that could restore peace and integrity to that one situation, and commit to take a small, immediate action so I don’t get overwhelmed. Third, to help me stay balanced and positive, I list a few things that I (and others) did right. Fourth, I set an intention to take one kind action, such as calling on an elderly relative or encouraging someone who is struggling.

Throughout the day, whenever I’m upset but don’t have time to write, I do a spot-check inventory—a quick version of the above that I do in my head.

*Working Step Ten gives me objectivity and power to address my issues without delay.*

Submission 409
October 2

“Tradition Ten: EDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the EDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 489

I was shocked when I first learned that food plans, exercise, and weight are not topics of EDA meetings. EDA does not endorse eating or exercise regimens because our solution is working the Steps to address the root causes of our eating disorders, which gives us perspective and balance in all aspects of life. Everything else—no matter how beneficial or detrimental to us individually—is an outside concern. Mind blowing!

I was reminded of this, when a member asked an EDA group that I attend to endorse a political position on an urgent issue in our community. We agreed that we, as individuals, should take action but decided that taking a political position as a group would distract from our primary purpose. Newcomers who desperately need help to recover might be confused or overwhelmed—and not come back—if our meeting espoused a political position. The person bringing the proposal wasn’t happy, but I was reminded that we leave our differences aside in meetings so everyone can hear the EDA message of recovery.

*May I listen to my fellow members with calm perspective and respect, regardless of their position on outside issues.*

Submission 386
Reflections on Recovery

October 31

“Allow yourself some holiday treats (people you love and foods you enjoy). Deprivation is not self-care.” *EDA Helpful Hints for the Holidays* (brochure)

My cravings for sweets used to scare me. After struggling all day not to eat them, I often binged in the evening.

It was a powerful insight when I realized that the voice saying “I need these sweets!” was actually a subconscious part of my own mind that was using eating disordered words to give me an important message: “I need rest and fun!” I realized my perfectionism was driving me all day and into the night, insisting I do chores and work straight through to bedtime. Only when I binged on sweets would I allow myself to stop.

Following suggestions from my sponsor and EDA friends, I learned to do just the necessary after-dinner chores, then give myself time for rest and recreation. Now I can have sweet foods in moderation—at holidays and any other time—because I spend sweet time with my family and friends. I laugh at jokes, watch movies, tackle cool puzzles, and play with my cats. These people and activities satisfy my cravings in a way that bingeing never did.

*Self-care during the holidays includes giving myself foods I enjoy and getting plenty of rest, recreation, and time with loved ones.*
November 1

“Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 192

Prayer and meditation have both played a big part in my recovery. I use these practices daily to improve my awareness of a personal Higher Power, even though I do not understand that power. What I do understand is the intense feeling of peace and wholeness that comes to me when I consciously choose to surrender my ego to be of service.

Some people say prayer is talking to God, and meditation is listening. For me, the daily ritual of choosing willingness to be of service to others is what constitutes my prayer. I offer up my whole being. I have tried many different types of meditation, and my experience is that it helps me reach a point beyond ego. Interestingly, at that point, I feel fully integrated within myself and understand what my Higher Power wants from me—an awareness that gives me the power and motivation to do the next right thing.

*Prayer and meditation give me peace and help me do what matters most each day.*
“**Tradition Eleven**: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need to maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, film, and web.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 489

Before I joined EDA, I thought meetings would be full of people bragging about their recovery and telling me what to do. Then, at my first meeting, I heard people sharing humbly about how they were getting through life’s challenges by relying on practices and concepts that helped them find perspective and balance. Their problems were a lot like mine, and their stories were inspiring. If they could do it, maybe I could, too!

I was able to recover because I found hope in the vulnerability and authenticity I heard in the shares at EDA meetings. I loved that EDA folks were warm, humble, and approachable. I loved that they could laugh at their predicaments and at themselves. Maintaining anonymity at the level of communication media reminds me that we succeed through humble service, not through self-seeking activities. I now see that EDA as a whole works pretty much like my EDA meetings. There is nothing promotional about it—no marketing, no spokespeople, nothing pushy at all.

*In all my relationships, may I practice “attraction, not promotion” so that I do not push anything on anyone.*
November 3

“Perceiving of ourselves as beings of love, we find meaning and joy in bringing that sacred gift to everyone we meet, and into everything we do. Taking this position frees us to care for ourselves, and others, with great kindness, compassion, and dignity.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 193

The winter holidays bring up my grief for beloved deceased family members. I’m grateful for the many ways I’ve learned in EDA to care for myself through these dark days.

Letting the tears flow is a great start. With acceptance that I may not be at my best, I “suit up and show up” at my office, in EDA meetings, and for service, grateful for the human connection these commitments provide. I meditate. I let it be okay that I don’t always feel okay. I trust myself now to ride the ebb and flow of grief without distracting myself with plans to change my body.

My Tenth Step inventories show me that the flip side of this grief is love. So, I return to the present and text or call loved ones who are still with me. When in doubt about invitations to holiday activities, I say yes. The grief always passes, with peace and even joy taking its place.

*May I care for myself and others with kindness, compassion, and dignity.*
Reflections on Recovery

December 1

“Step Twelve: 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.” EDA Big Book, p. 199

I came to EDA miserable, exhausted, and ready for change. I had multiple eating disorders and was so self-absorbed that my own problems were all that mattered to me.

As I worked each Step in EDA, my perspective grew clearer. I accepted that my self-absorption was due to my basic needs not being met. I learned that I alone had responsibility for addressing these and was pleasantly surprised when my selfishness—and the intensity of my emotions—decreased as I took action. With each Step, I learned small things I could do to help others.

At Step Twelve, I started sponsoring. I continued doing my best to practice EDA principles in all my affairs, which gradually increased my resilience. I finally let go of my eating disorders. This miracle happened because I worked Step Twelve!

Sharing my experiences in recovery strengthens me and creates hope for others.

Submission 411

9 The term “spiritual awakening” can refer to an event—a vital spiritual experience—or to a gradual change. Those of us who are atheists also experience a transformation, enabling us to place service before selfishness.
December 2

“**Tradition Twelve**: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.” *EDA Big Book*, p. 498

“Placing principles before personalities” means listening to the message rather than judging the speaker. This means overlooking personality quirks, focusing on love and tolerance, listening to minority opinions, and respecting people regardless of whether we like them. It also means refraining from putting anyone on a pedestal. In EDA we all matter, and no one is more or less important than the rest.

Anonymity is an expression of humility. By offering humble service, without expecting recognition or reward, members support their own recovery and contribute to the well-being of the entire EDA community.

One reason we rotate service roles is so members remain humble—equal to all the rest—within EDA. It isn’t always easy. One group that I attend had a chairperson who did not want to rotate to a new role. People in that group loved her but decided it was in everyone’s best interest for others to take turns as chairperson. Rotating gives new members an opportunity to benefit from giving service, prevents burnout, and reminds us all that EDA is bigger than any one person.

*Preserving my anonymity and placing principles before personalities helps make EDA meetings safe and healthy for everyone.*

Submission 388
Reflections on Recovery