

EDA Motto: HEALTH



HONESTY, EQUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, LOVE, TRUST, HUMILITY

HONESTY: Truthfulness, especially with ourselves.

EQUALITY: Every single human being has equal worth regardless of health, accomplishments, material or social status.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Being responsible for our own actions and feelings.

LOVE: Love and tolerance of ourselves and others.

TRUST: Reliance on God, as we understand God.¹

HUMILITY: The desire to seek and do God's will.

¹ "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). Reliance on any one of these conceptions confers a perspective that transcends our immediate physical, social, and emotional circumstances and allows us to "keep calm and carry on" with what really matters.

More on Eating Disorders

In our individual pursuit of happiness and success, even pursuit of usefulness and selfless service, we who have an eating disorder have struggled with the business of living.

Our problems, though many and varied, have elements in common. We have mismanaged anger, avoided growing pains that might have set us free, indulged in unhealthy forms of dependence on those around us, and engaged in futile, damaging attempts to control our bodies and other people.

We suffered many forms of illness – physical, emotional, and spiritual – as a consequence of our attempts to control our problems and ourselves through ever-greater exertion of self-will. Most of us lost our self-respect, our hopes and dreams, and anything like meaningful purpose for our lives. Many have lost or compromised their health. Many have died.

We tried in vain to control our emotional natures with some or all of the following behaviors: bingeing; purging; laxative abuse; over-exercising; self-denial; restricting; self-mutilation; misuse of insulin; rigidity of thought and habit; obsession with weight, food, and body image.

We sought escape through many other forms of obsession. We often blamed those who love us most for our agony. We were depressed, anxious, chronically irritable and unhappy. We experienced complete defeat only to emerge – just hours or days later – with renewed resolve to cling to the same attitudes and actions that made us miserable in the first place. No matter what we tried, we somehow couldn't face reality, deal with it effectively, and walk free.

There is no magic about recovery. It is hard work. We were powerless to change until we came to believe we could recover. We then surrendered – usually in fits and starts – to the uncomfortable process of making deliberate changes in our response to life. This process of giving up our old reactive coping mechanisms and adopting new, deliberate, active skills and attitudes gradually restores our integrity, self-esteem and authority. This is not an overnight matter. There are sure to be setbacks, moments of deep unhappiness and fear, yet we found that when we work diligently and patiently, we are amazed by a quality of peace, happiness and usefulness never before imagined.

We wish this for you, whether you find recovery in or out of these rooms. 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.

We wholeheartedly welcome you to join us as we trudge the Road of Happy Destiny together.

The Twelve Steps of EDA¹ (EDA Big Book pages 113-115)

Here are the steps we took, suggested as a program of recovery, through which we allow the needed changes in ourselves to occur:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our eating disorders— that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood God*.²
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood God*, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening³ 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.

Many of us first reacted to this list like those who first encounter AA's Twelve Steps: "What an order! I can't go through with it!" And, in the same way that AA members comfort newcomers, we in EDA are happy to reassure, "Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles." The point is that we are willing to grow along the lines we have set down. We aim for balance, understanding that "our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us." We claim progress, never perfection.

Our description of the eating-disordered mind in Chapters 3 and 4, coupled with our personal adventures before and after finding recovery, make clear three pertinent ideas:

- That we had serious problems—eating disorders—that we could not solve despite our best efforts.
- That no accessible human power had relieved our eating disorders.
- That reliance on God, a Higher Power, or a higher purpose could—and would—restore us to sanity and set us free.

¹ EDA's 12 Steps and 12 Traditions are reprinted and adapted from the first 164 pages of the "Big Book," *Alcoholics Anonymous*, with permission from Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt this material does not mean that AA has reviewed or approved this or any other EDA material. AA is a program for recovery from alcoholism only. Use of AA material in the program of EDA, which is patterned after that of AA but which addresses other issues, does not constitute endorsement by, or affiliation with, AA.

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³The 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.

Twelve Traditions of EDA¹

(EDA Big Book pages 486-489)

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon EDA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God² as God may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for EDA membership is a desire to recover from an eating disorder.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or EDA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message of recovery to others with eating disorders.
6. 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.
7. Every EDA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. EDA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. EDA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. EDA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the EDA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. 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.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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Suggestions that help us build recovery

- Eat when hungry, stop when moderately full. Consistent nutrition is essential for recovery. Recovery is about feelings, not food, but we can't reason or build trust when bingeing, purging, or starving.
- 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.
- Ask others for input but make your own decisions.
- 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.
- Get open with others. Honesty restores integrity.
- Develop willingness to look at things differently. Recovery is not rigid.
- Go to 12-Step meetings, read the literature and work the Steps with a sponsor.
- Be proactive and plan your recovery.

EDA's 9th Step Promises¹ (EDA Big Book page 185)

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will know a new freedom and a new happiness.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.

No matter how far down we have fallen, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

We will see that our service to God, our Higher Power, or the greater good has done for us what seemed humanly impossible.

Are these extravagant promises?

We think not.

They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

They will always materialize if we work for them.

¹ *Alcoholics Anonymous*. (2001) New York, NY: AA World Services, Inc., 83-84. Substituting “we have fallen” for a phrase that is inappropriate for the current context, and substituting “service to God, our Higher Power, or the greater good” in place of language that is less inclusive