



EDA Big Book Step Workshop

Preparation for Step One

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over our eating disorders – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Eating Disorder Log (you do not need to put your name on this!)

Please write about when and how your eating disorder started:

Please check off the different forms your eating disorder has taken:

| | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anorexia | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulimia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise bulimia | <input type="checkbox"/> Orthorexia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Binge eating disorder | <input type="checkbox"/> Other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED includes night eating disorder and pica) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compulsive eating | <input type="checkbox"/> Obsession with food, weight, body image, or exercise |

Please check any other issues you have had:

| | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alcoholism | <input type="checkbox"/> Narcotics or other drug problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual abuse survivor | <input type="checkbox"/> PTSD and/or disassociation issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Gambling issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kleptomania | <input type="checkbox"/> Health effects/other (please specify): _____ |

Please identify actions you have taken to address your eating disorder:

| | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Twelve Step Groups <input type="checkbox"/> AA–Alcoholics Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> NA–Narcotics Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> OA–Overeaters Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> FAA–Food Addicts Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> ABA–Anorexics and Bulimics Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> SAA–Sex Addicts Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> GA–Gamblers Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> Other(s) (please list): _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Inpatient treatment (list where and when): _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive outpatient treatment programs (list when and where): _____ _____ _____ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual therapy (list types and years) _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other support groups: _____ _____ _____ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other spiritual solutions: List activities and years _____ _____ _____ _____ |

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Step One: We admitted we were powerless over our eating disorders – that our lives had become unmanageable.

▪ Please list events and ideas/feelings that made your eating disorder **worse (more awful)**:

- Events (examples include major life events, such as death, divorce, job loss, rape, other major threats to health and safety)

- Feelings (examples include durable **ideas** that led to feelings of inadequacy, fear, anger, resentment, self-pity, despair)

▪ Please list events and ideas/feelings that made your eating disorder **better (less awful)**:

- Events (might include new relationships, accepting responsibilities that “got you out of yourself” such as caring for children, adoption of spiritual practices, etc)

- Feelings (**ideas** such as appreciation and positive regard for the good things in your life (including your physical senses/sensuality/physical being); positive appreciation for your own abilities; willingness to love and serve others without expectation of recognition or reward; gratitude for all that is good, right, and whole)

▪ List examples of specific areas where you’d like to see some improvement in your life right now:

- These can be, but don’t have to be, about food/weight/body image! Many of us recover substantially in some areas while remaining sort of “stuck” in other respects. Do you have any rigidity or fears with respect to food, weight, body image, work, relationships, or sex? Please go ahead and list them!

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Preparation for Step One

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over our eating disorders – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Keep it short, simple, and honest!

List examples of how you have been powerless over your eating disorder—times you knew you were causing harm but just could not seem to stop—no matter how hard you tried, no matter the possible consequences, and no matter how great the desire:

List examples of how having an eating disorder created unmanageability in your life—ways in which you or others were put in harm's way, or where you could not seem to do what you knew was right for you, as a direct result of your eating disorder (consider health; work/career; relationships (including family, friendships, intimate); finances; living situations; spiritual condition):

Do you use your eating disorder to help you manage your emotional states in one way or another so your life *feels* more manageable?

- Yes
- No

Do you feel completely safe within yourself, able to rely on yourself to do all that is required of you, without resorting to behaviors that you know cause harm?

- Yes
- No

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop

Preparation for Step Two

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Write what you **can** believe in, that **could** bring sanity (balance) to your life. Examples include: God, Higher Power, higher purpose, a deeper connection to what really matters, perspective that comes from a steady reliance on God/Higher Power/higher purpose. Give those ideas a voice. "I know my life is safe and peaceful—no matter what—when I seek and try to do God's will on a continuous basis." "When I accept and surrender to the idea that I don't have to be the center of my own universe, I can see where my talents and energy can make a difference in the world." "I can't, God can."

What ideas *get in the way* of your *reliance* on what could bring sanity (balance) into your life? Examples

include: fear of losing what I have; not fully trusting that I will get what I want and need if I am working for the benefit of something "out there;" arrogance; pride in self-sufficiency; laziness; self-deceit; shame; confusion; frustration; despair. Be specific! Give these ideas a voice: "I ought to be able to do this myself," "I'm not that bad; I can handle this!" "This God stuff is stupid and I don't trust any of it." "The God I grew up with is a punishing God, and I deserve punishment." "I don't deserve recovery." "This all very well and good, but I want to make this about losing weight." "I hate change: it scares me."

What answers do you have for *your* ideas that get in the way? Examples include: "Of myself I am nothing, the Father doeth the works." "Get thee behind me, Satan!" "I can fire my old God and hire a new one." "I choose life, dammit!" "I am not being asked to surrender to anything I do not fully trust." "Trust will come with practice. I need to practice *relying* on what I believe instead of just talking about it." "I can't, but He can!" "Shut up, ED!" "I will die, or will die unhappy, if I *don't* change."

Balance

Please write your own concept of balance:

How do you know when you are in balance?

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop 4th Step Inventory: General Instructions

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

For additional clarification, see the EDA Big Book, pages 132-158 and 526-543.

All material in this Step Workshop packet can be found in the EDA Big Book.

Source and Reason/Cause:

Enter one Source (from the asterisked items from your brainstorming list first).

List each Reason on a separate row. Make the reasons specific. For example, instead of saying that someone upset you, give an example of what they did or didn't *do* that upset you.

Move to the next Source and (as described above) list each Reason separately.

Repeat until your sheet is full. Ask for more sheets if you need them!

At Risk/Affects My:

Next, for each Reason, write if the situation affects or threatens any of the following: self-esteem, pride, ambition, finances, security, sexual or intimacy needs, and family or social relationships.

- **Self-esteem** reflects the way we feel about or value ourselves: self-respect or self-regard. Our dignity and composure, as well as our self-esteem, can feel threatened when people or institutions disrespect, discredit, or undermine who we are (or what we are trying to do.)
- **Pride** is taking pleasure or finding joy in one's achievements, possessions, or character. Pride can feel like self-esteem, but it contains the seeds of arrogance—a hard, brittle humorlessness—that interferes with our ability to connect empathetically with others. People and situations that threaten our pride appear to compromise or diminish the way we want others to see us.
- **Ambition** includes the desire for reward, recognition, or validation. Ambitions can be long term, such as dreams and goals for our future (jobs, finances, relationships), but they can also be short term desires or wishes (wanting to be respected or included in conversations, events, and friendships). Anything that reduces the chances that we will get what we want is a threat to our ambition.
- **Finances** mean our economic base: our bank accounts. Much that we depend on for our stability, including hopes for future opportunities, may be tied up with our sources of income.
- **Security** involves anything we need—or think we need—for health and safety, such as food, clothing, home, job, and transportation. For some of us, the possibility of any change initially felt like a challenge to our security!
- **Sexual or intimacy needs** include relationships of trust and mutuality that enable us to care for ourselves and others at a physical, emotional, and (for some) spiritual level. Whether or not we are able to recognize it before recovery, part of being human involves the need for physical connection and intimate touch. Threats in this area can include attitudinal problems, unreasonable expectations, health issues, lack of trust, and things that lead to and include infidelity.
- **Family and social relationships** cover connections with members of our current families, families of origin, friendships, and coworkers—on the job, in the community, and in organizations and institutions. Threats to such relationships can include issues with integrity and trust (as with sexual relationships), but may involve external factors, such as institutional or cultural bias, societal expectations or prejudice, and slander.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop 4th Step Inventory: General Instructions

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

If we feel **any other emotions** in addition to the 4th Step topic (resentment, fear, self-pity, shame, guilt, confusion, frustration, despair) when we review the sources and reasons columns, we list them.

In most cases, impact to any one part of our lives is likely to affect many other aspects. Getting it all down on paper is important, but *it is not necessary to document every possible connection for every perceived threat*: if we did, the 4th Step Inventory could take years! **Keep things as simple as possible.**

My Error/My Part

For resentments:

As we review our work so far, we can see that our most important relationships are usually quite messy, and while other people involved are not necessarily blameless, we must keep in mind that the inventory is ours—not anyone else's. We need to stay focused on our own thoughts and behavior. Anything that interferes with our ability to see our issues clearly leaves us vulnerable to the familiar comfort of irrational, old ways of thinking and behaving. We have to be rid of these or risk backsliding.

We consider each person on the resentments inventory with empathy and compassion. We use the resentment prayer—"This is a sick person. How can I be helpful? God, save me from being angry. Thy will be done."—for each individual *before* looking at our part.

Once we have considered the suffering of others involved in each reason for resentment, we can fill out the fourth column, My Error/My Part. We resolutely consider where we had been at fault, disregarding the other person's errors altogether.

For All Inventory Topics:

Exactly how had we been selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, and/or afraid? What, exactly, prevented us from doing the right things?

Common Errors to Consider

- **Self-seeking** behavior is when we act out in ways that draw attention to ourselves or to gain advantage over others. It is always selfish! It can be as subtle as saying to someone, "I look fat" when we are looking for them to say that we *don't* (because fat is supposed to be a bad thing). In most cases we are seeking comfort, validation, and reassurance that we exist and are noteworthy or remarkable in some way.
- **Selfishness** is being concerned with our needs while ignoring the needs of others. Being inconsiderate of others is always selfish, but not necessarily self-seeking. Thinking we know how other people should live their lives reflects a selfish perspective, but is not necessarily self-seeking if we do not share or impose our opinions.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop 4th Step Inventory: General Instructions

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

- **Dishonesty** comes in many forms including outright lying, dishonesty through omission, dishonesty with ourselves, cheating, infidelity, untrustworthiness, unreasonable expectations of self and others, arrogant and ungrateful attitudes, and blaming others for what ails us. Anything that shields us from the truth about ourselves is a form of dishonesty.
- **Fear** is a complex emotion that can prevent us from seeing the truth about ourselves (and others) in the context of our lives as a whole. When we perceive a threat to any of the aspects of life that matter to us (the list above), we are likely to respond in ways that do not reflect the person we want to be. When we are afraid of losing what we already have, afraid of not getting what we want, afraid of not being good enough, or afraid of the unknown, we typically react from a place of selfish protectiveness rather than a place of empathy and compassion. This is self-limiting, for it prevents us from growth and from creating the relationships of trust we need to recover.

If you are confused, ask for help! It is not easy to see our part in situations where there is significant emotional loading.

Resolution

As noted on page 69 in the AA Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* and pages 226-227 of the EDA Big Book:

- We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them.
- Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it.
- In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.

In each situation, we ask ourselves what helpful attitude we can now assume, what “kindly and tolerant view” of other people or our situations might now help us take appropriate action—instead of an inappropriate reaction—the next time we experience a similar feeling.

With respect to fear, self-pity, shame, frustration, confusion, and despair, we consider using the **fear prayer** from page 68 of the AA Big Book: “We ask Him to remove our fear [self-pity, shame...] and direct our attention to what He would have us be.”

We ask ourselves what a person of integrity and dignity would do if they found the courage to act despite their emotion. We then commit to do our best to act accordingly.

By relying on God, our Higher Power, or higher purpose to provide perspective and guidance, we are using our new frame of reference to define a way of looking at each situation that takes away the pain and power to hurt us.

Please note: Although we may be able to define a resolution that should allow us to respond with grace and dignity to situations that have formerly troubled us, this does not mean we have the power to carry that out—that’s the point of the rest of the Steps!

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop 4th Step Inventory: Fear

One emotion we examine thoroughly is fear², because it features so prominently in our lives. We ask ourselves what fundamental issues give rise to not only specific fears, but also our pervasive anxiety. The AA text suggests that we were afraid because self-reliance failed us, and indeed, many fears seemed to stem from our lack of control. Even when we are in complete control, or think we are in control, we may still be afraid, because we have not always been able to do what we know we need to do.

All of us—whether we suffered from orthorexia, anorexia, bulimia, compulsive overeating, BED, OSFED, or other disorders—found balance and moderation with food challenging. Most of us were afraid of gaining (or losing) weight. Our thoughts tended to go back to old patterns whenever we were anxious. For some of us, even the *idea* of recovery was scary; what a cycle of misery that created!

Many of us were afraid of our bodies. We struggled to control our impulses. Some of us were afraid of the intimacy of sex; others were frightened at the intensity and/or impropriety of our sexual urges. Awkwardly, some of us were all the above. 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.

Most of us were frightened that we would be even more miserable, anxious, and unhappy if we stopped engaging in all forms of our eating disorders.

Fear: Please list things that frightened or still frighten you. Consider: death, illness, insanity, abandonment, loneliness, aging, the unknown, losing what we have, not getting what we want, financial insecurity, body image, sex and intimacy, not being good enough, and fear for others' safety and security. Keep it simple: list your fears. *Leave the details for your Fear Inventory.*

4th Step Brainstorming List: **Fear** (things that frightened or still frighten me)

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|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Next, go back and **put an asterisk by the top ten entries**—the fears about which you feel the most intense emotion. When you fill out your Fear Inventory, start with the asterisked items.

² For additional details on fear, see the EDA Big Book, pages 149-154 and 528-531

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop 4th Step Inventory: Self-Pity and Shame

Self-pity: We identify reasons we felt or feel sorry for ourselves.

While the AA 4th Step format does not explicitly include self-pity, the AA Big Book identifies self-pity as a problem in twelve places in addition to listing relief from self-pity as one of the 9th Step promises.

Many of us in EDA found that we were not able to grow into full recovery without addressing the topic of self-pity specifically. Sometimes, self-pity that grew from a resentment or guilt persisted long after the initial source was addressed. At other times, we found ourselves all bound up in self-pity without any obvious connection to a resentment, fear, or guilt.

4th Step Brainstorming List: **Self-pity** (reasons I felt or feel sorry for myself)

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| | |

Shame: things about which we felt or feel ashamed, despite not being responsible for them.

Unlike self-pity, the first 164 pages of the AA Big Book barely mention shame at all. Yet many of us (38 references to shame in our EDA Big Book stories alone) remain mired in shame, unable to make significant changes in our lives, until we lighten the load by addressing shame directly. By including shame in our EDA 4th Step, we require ourselves to define a new way of thinking that enables us to live with greater circumspection, peace, and dignity. When brainstorming shame, be sure to include situations where you were bullied or abused, and anything for which you feel embarrassment (but which you did not cause), such as childhood poverty, basic personality (i.e. introverted/extroverted), gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other peoples' issues.

4th Step Brainstorming List: **Shame** (things about which I felt or feel ashamed, though not responsible for them)

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| | |

As before, go back and **put an asterisk by the top entries in each category**—the ones about which you feel the most intense emotion; you'll want to start your Self-pity and Shame inventory sheets with them.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop

4th Step Inventory: Shame

Shame: things about which I felt or feel ashamed, though not responsible for them. Be sure to include situations where you were bullied or abused, and anything for which you feel embarrassment (but which you did not cause), such as childhood poverty, basic personality (i.e. too introverted or extroverted), gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other peoples' problems.

| Source | Reason/Cause | At Risk/Affects My | My Error/My Part | Resolution |
|--------|--------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|
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EDA Big Book Step Workshop

4th Step Inventory: Confusion, Frustration, and Despair

Page 151 in the AA Big Book refers to an experience of momentary oblivion, followed by “an awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen: Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair.” While the AA 4th Step format addresses terror (fear), we in EDA have found it useful to consider confusion (bewilderment), frustration (usually self-directed anger), and despair as separate topics.

Once we have explored all eight categories, and worked hard to outline more reliable and better-balanced ways of thinking about each situation that used to trouble us, we find we are much better positioned to move ahead with the rest of the Steps.

We remember that the remaining Steps help us find the peace and power to leverage our newfound perspective, and walk free.

4th Step Brainstorming List: **Confusion** (situations where I felt or still feel abandoned or bewildered)

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

4th Step Brainstorming List: **Frustration** (things that make me angry, even if I have no resentment in connection to them)

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

4th Step Brainstorming List: **Despair** (reasons for hopelessness, past and present)

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|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

As before, go back and **put an asterisk by the top entries in each category**—the ones about which you feel the most intense emotion.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop

Step Five

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

But I'm not done with my 4th Step! After all that work on your 4th Step, you may still feel like you have left a lot of business unfinished. **That's ok.** We are all works in progress. If you have considered your part and written out reasonable resolutions for the most troublesome items in each of the eight categories in Step 4, you have just taken a huge step forward in your recovery. In truth, you may have skipped matters of great importance. You may feel uncomfortable moving on. If so, we are confident any important issues will surface in due time. We think it far better to keep moving—building flexibility, strength, and resilience by using the rest of the tools—than to get mired in a “not-perfect-enough” 4th Step. As you work the rest of the Steps, you will develop the skills, trust, and confidence to handle new (and old) provocations as they arise.

We found that outlining a way of thinking that enables us to live in peace and dignity (as we've attempted to do with the 4th Step resolutions column) doesn't do much good unless we follow through on our plans. That's why the next chapter, “Into Action,” explains exactly how we go about clearing up the blockages that have been keeping us from doing what we know we need to do.

Step Five asks us to be accountable—to ourselves, to God, and to another human being—not for what was done to us, nor for what we have had to endure past and present, but for our own dysfunctional thinking and action. This is darned uncomfortable work! We think it necessary, however, because it builds objectivity, provides outside perspective, and demonstrates willingness to take responsibility for our recovery, and change.³

Please read the section titled “To your 5th Step recipient” on pages 164-165 to your 5th Step recipient.

When your recipient is ready, read each row of your 4th Step. Pause every now and again, to see if there is feedback. Be sure to leave a few minutes at the end. If you receive feedback, *jot down notes in the space below.* Be sure to thank the person who heard your 5th Step!

After giving a 5th Step, we may experience intense emotion, or we may feel absolutely spent and exhausted. Because of this, we recommend taking a quiet hour to reflect upon the work we have put into our recovery thus far, and then perhaps to thank God for the opportunity to know Him better. We wrap up the hour with a short gratitude list to help us demonstrate our commitment to stay focused on the positive, and on recovery. *Due to the compressed nature of the workshop, however, we ask that you defer the reflective period until after Step 6, spending just a few minutes now to think about how you feel about the openheartedness and kindness of the person who heard your 5th Step, and about your experience sharing with them. List a few things for which you are grateful. Don't forget to include your own courage!* _____

³ *Eating Disorders Anonymous.* (2016), Carlsbad, CA: General Service Board of EDA, Inc., 162-163.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop

Step Six

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Due to the compressed nature of the workshop, your 5th Step experience may have left you feeling a bit disgruntled. There wasn't enough time, was there? You are so not alone: by this point in the workshop it will be a minor miracle if we all aren't completely frustrated!

First, we must recognize our anger and accept it as a sign that we earnestly want to get this right, and not short-change ourselves or anyone else. At our very deepest core, *we sincerely want recovery*—and we want it for others, too. It *is* truly a shame we cannot take all the time needed to permit a full, whole sharing with Step Five, however, even a less-than-complete experience *is* a valid start.

Please remember we are time-boxing each Step so we can get through them quickly. Your recovery—all of our recoveries—will benefit from the experience of letting go of frustration and making the best of the situation. And so we move on, trusting the later Steps to bring a measure of peace and perspective.

Turning to Step Six, we now consider what happened every time we put our emotional states in a position of central importance in our lives. Somewhat ironically, we were weakened and diminished, vulnerable to crippling levels of resentment, fear, self-pity, shame, guilt, confusion, frustration, and despair.⁵ When focused on our own pain and misery, we lost sight of the broader context in which our lives made sense. When we took Step Three, we agreed to turn our will and our lives—our thoughts and actions—over to our God, a Higher Power, or service to the greater good. But our self-centered pain and fear held us back; many of our defects were still with us. This felt unsettling—even depressing—for most of us. What were we to do about these issues? That is what Steps Six and Seven are all about. In Step Six, we consider whether we are entirely willing to face and be rid of everything that has been holding us back.

Some troublesome character traits to consider (in addition to those mentioned above):

- **Pride**, because it creates barriers to authenticity and connection with others.
- **Procrastination** and other forms of laziness (including our sometimes life-long excuses for failing to take action we know is good and right), because inaction is the fastest way back to old patterns.
- **Self-righteous indignation**, because it leads to resentment and self-pity.
- **All-or-nothing thinking**, because it limits our options and forces us to cram our messy realities into rigid compartments that have little to do with life as we need to understand it to be effective.
- **Lust**, because fantasizing about and desiring attention for ourselves leads away from true love that is focused on care for other human beings. Instead, it leads to feelings of unrequited longing, to situations where we are likely to break the trust others have in us, to actions that hurt our integrity, or to some combination of the above.
- **Focusing on our own “needs” that are not universal, basic human needs**, because these only hinder our recovery. Examples include: requiring special foods when not medically necessary, demanding specific attitudes and behaviors from other people as a prerequisite for our recovery, and privileging our ambition for recognition and reward over other goals.
- **Gossip**, because it violates relationships of trust, hurts others, and lengthens the list of things for which we will later need to make amends.

⁵ Everything on this page references *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. (2016), Carlsbad, CA: General Service Board of EDA, Inc., 168-172.



EDA Big Book Step Workshop

Step Seven

Step Seven: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

Step Seven requires humility and courage.⁷ In Step Six, we realized that many of the character defects that gave rise to our eating disorders persisted long after we became willing to let them go. It is humbling to recognize that we can no more *will ourselves* to be free of self-centeredness—or of the vulnerability to pain and misery that it causes—than we can *will ourselves* to be free of our eating disorders. Our main concern now should be how we can get out of our own way, so we can turn our attention to what matters in the long run: service to the greater good, our God, Higher Power, or higher purpose.

This is exactly where our sponsors step in to help us identify character-building activities that open us up to new experiences. We find we can leverage the pain of our defects to good purpose, replacing old patterns of thought and behavior with meaningful action.

Write out character-building exercises that counter two of your most significant character defects:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

As we work on our Step Seven exercises, selfishness will start to diminish. We take care of ourselves so that we can better serve God and/or the greater good, and we discover that what we thought were our shortcomings either turn out to be our greatest assets, or they slowly weaken like a muscle that isn't exercised. We do not need to worry about our defects! We can let them go, and rely on our Higher Power or higher purpose to do the work of removing them while we work on strengthening our character.

Return to the list of defects you made in Step Six. On the right side column, across from each defect, list a corresponding asset. For example, stubbornness can be persistence and determination; pride can be caring about integrity, honor, and excellence; lust signals a desire for a deeper connection with another human being; self-centeredness is evidence of willingness to meet our own basic needs. Are you ready to let God decide how to use your capabilities, good and bad? Are you ready to get out of your own way and focus on what really matters?

Please write out the 7th Step prayer and commitment (page 178 in the EDA Big Book). You can choose to write one or the other, or both:

Write down any form of this prayer or statement that feels right to you. We suggest you read it aloud daily, and apply it throughout the day. (If writing your own version, you'll appreciate it later if are succinct!)

⁷ All material on this page references *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. (2016), Carlsbad, CA: General Service Board of EDA, Inc., 172-179.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop Step Eight

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

The long form of EDA's Step Eight says, "*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.*"⁸

Forgiveness brought us peace, yet perhaps we cannot forgive everything. Sometimes people have treated us (and others) in ways that are simply unconscionable. In such cases, we remember that we ourselves seemed helpless in the grip of our eating disorders. At times, we felt that we had no effective choice in what we thought and did. We were powerless in the grip of emotions and unable to manage our thoughts and behavior.

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. We now know that we had to find a different context to get any kind of durable objectivity. This has not been an easy matter for us. Most of us were unsure if we could make this new perspective work for us in the long run. How difficult must it then be for others to change, when we find it so difficult ourselves? We remember that those who hurt us are as vulnerable as we are, though it may not always seem that way.

While forgiveness is critical to our own recovery, we think it is important to point out that in cases where we were the object of, rather than the perpetrator of, serious injuries such as rape or battery, we are personally accountable for ensuring the situation is safe for everyone. In other words, if there is a present danger to others, we think it advisable to contact the proper authorities to ensure that the perpetrator is in custody or otherwise publicly tracked (if at all possible).

Making amends to people we have not forgiven may feel insincere, but doing so opens a door through which empathy and forgiveness can enter. All that is required is the recognition that other people suffer from thoughts that create pain and misery just like we do. When we feel empathy for the people on our list, even if we do not like their behavior, we may be ready to move on to Step Nine.

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.

⁸ All material on this page references *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. (2016), Carlsbad, CA: General Service Board of EDA, Inc., 180-181.



EDA Big Book Step Workshop

Step Nine

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

The long form of EDA's Step Nine suggests, *"After counsel with a sponsor, or an EDA (or other Twelve-Step group) member who has worked the Twelve Steps, we went to the people we had injured and admitted our fault and regret. Our statements were simple, sincere, and without blame. We set right the wrongs as best we could and expected nothing in return. Accountability set us free."*⁹

Keys to Step Nine

- We must be willing to go to any length to set right the wrongs we ourselves committed in thought, word (written or spoken), and deed.
- We should review our plan with someone who has perspective. It is altogether too easy to overlook needed action or blow things out of proportion. In cases where we behaved badly toward someone who criminally abused us, we advise talking with a trusted counselor about whether to inform proper authorities of the crimes, and then turning our attention to helping others who have been hurt as we were, rather than by making amends directly to the perpetrator. Our goal is restitution for our own errors, but making amends to people who treated us criminally could be seen as justifying or condoning the crime. We prioritize the safety of others (those who might be in danger from the same individual) over our personal need to set right our wrongs directly with the perpetrator. In such cases, we help others instead.
- We should also review our plans for restitution to those who might be unduly affected, especially where financial amends are indicated. We have no right to deprive our families of our time and money without their consent. We must make it clear, however, that setting right our wrongs is essential to our recovery. We must put a plan into action that enables us to make full restitution, however slowly.
- We must not take any kind of arrogant attitude when we approach people we have hurt. We do not discuss our new perspective, our success so far, or anything that might unduly irk—or further injure—anyone else. We briefly explain what we are trying to do and why, no matter how vulnerable this may make us feel. We state what we did and we apologize. We ask if we have hurt them in some other way we did not bring up. We make no mention whatsoever of anything the other person said or did. 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. We try to agree with any terms suggested, unless others must first be consulted. We thank the person for taking time to talk with us and we take our leave.
- We can have no expectations of the other people involved. Although usually the results are heartwarming and restorative of our trust in others, this may not always be the case. Our family members and spouses may not want us to approach other people with ideas about financial restitution until we have first made restitution to those at home. Some people to whom we wish to apologize may not accept our apologies or our amends. Others may not forgive us. It does not matter, so long as we have made every effort to do our part.
- We can have no expectations about how we ourselves will respond to the act of making amends. We are likely to feel vulnerable and exposed and can expect to experience rejection, remorse, and pain. We must not, however, shirk from our job now. We need to demonstrate to ourselves and to the world the sincerity of our stance. With Step Nine, we reestablish integrity and build a foundation for trust. Nothing does this so well as the humble admission of errors and follow-through on commitments to right the wrongs.

⁹ All material on this page references *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. (2016), Carlsbad, CA: General Service Board of EDA, Inc., 182-184.



EDA Big Book Step Workshop Step Ten

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

The long form of EDA's Step Ten suggests: "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."¹¹

Keys to Step Ten

- **Deal with things as they come up. Don't wait.** A spot-check inventory—a quick review taken whenever we find ourselves feeling out of sorts or troubled—is highly recommended. You can use the format below, or any other format that works for you.
- **Keep it simple!** It is essential to establish a reflective daily practice that allows us to keep growing stronger and more resilient.
- **Avoid perfectionism.** If we try to cover every detail every day, we will be exhausted.
- **Make it daily.** It is important that we deal with matters promptly, avoiding rumination and hand-wringing. It is easier to keep things simple if we don't allow things to build up.
- **Keep it balanced.** With Step Ten, we continue to take personal inventory, *not only of what is wrong, but also what is right*. If we do not do this, we may lose heart and stop. Don't let that happen: include gratitude for what you were able to do that is good and right on your inventory.
- **Cover first things first.** Don't waste time on trivial annoyances unless they are impacting other people or are deeply upsetting. This may require significant discipline. Consider the triage exercise an investment that fosters the growth of a mature, objective perspective.
- **Take care of basics.** Ask yourself regularly: *Am I hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or ashamed?* We are sure to be more reactive and self-focused when we neglect to take care of our basic needs, such as adequate nutrition, safe outlets for expression, connection with others, and sufficient sleep. 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.
- **Find the humor.** Life is short and lives are precious, but our responses to life's challenges are often hilarious. Holding a perspective that allows for humor can reduce shame, allowing us to talk about our experiences in a way that neither minimizes nor dramatizes.
- **Be an adult.** Ask others for input and make your own decisions. Then be accountable for your decisions and keep your word.
- **Deal with problems directly.** When anxious, get outside, do something to refocus on your physical senses, pray, or meditate. Then deal with the problem head-on.
- **Get open with others.** honesty restores integrity. We build trust with ourselves by being authentic with others. And, as the saying goes, we are only as sick as our secrets.
- **Be flexible.** Develop willingness to look at things differently. Recovery is not rigid.
- **Do the work.** Thinking about perspective and balance can be helpful, but we have to do the work of taking care of ourselves. Then we can focus on service. The Steps do not work through osmosis!

Writing your 10th Step: It is essential to practice moderation and balance in working each of the Steps. We encourage you to now spend twenty minutes completing the suggested 10th Step format below, however, there are many viable formats. Take what you can use and leave the rest!

¹¹ All material on this page references *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. (2016), Carlsbad, CA: General Service Board of EDA, Inc., 187-192.



EDA Big Book Step Workshop
Step Ten Personal Inventory

Events: Jot down events that occurred in the last twenty-four hours to remind yourself of emotional ups and downs. Avoid perfectionism: know you will never get it all covered, and that is absolutely ok. _____

Issues: Write about two or three problems that surfaced in the last twenty-four hours. Using the 4th Step format, work these through, searching for resolutions—how you would want to handle similar situations were these to arise again. Make a note if you need to do anything to address the current situation.

| Source | Reason/Cause | At Risk/Affects My | My Error/My Part | Resolution |
|--------|--------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Is there anything you need to do urgently, to set right new wrongs? _____

Is there anything you need to discuss with someone else? _____

Gratitude: Write about things in your life for which you are grateful. Be sure to include what you yourself did to support your recovery, and right thoughts and actions you took during the course of the day. _____

Goals: This is not a task list. Write out a reminder you may need, and one or two things you can do today that could lighten someone else’s load or make you proud to be a human being. _____

We recommend spending no more than twenty minutes or so a day on your 10th Step. Keep it simple. If you do this every day, you will be amazed!

Reminder: What you see here, what you hear here, let it stay here. Do not discuss problems and personalities (other than your own!) with anyone.



EDA Big Book Step Workshop Step Eleven

Step Eleven: 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.

The long form of EDA's Step Eleven suggests: "We earnestly and consciously seek to understand and to do whatever will best serve our God or higher purpose every day. When we take care of our basic needs and place ourselves in service to our Higher Power or higher purpose, we gain the peace and perspective needed for recovery."¹²

Step Eleven challenges all of us—religious, spiritual, agnostic, and atheist—to push past our limitations and get into action. It prepares us to face the day with renewed commitment and resolve to do our best, as we strive to be of cheerful service to those around us and to God, our Higher Power, or the greater good—whatever that may be for us. While there is no one right way to do this, we find that a daily discipline is well worth the effort. Each day, when thinking about the twenty-four hours ahead, we consider our goals from the 10th Step inventory. We think about how our activities can positively affect those around us and what we can do that matters in the long run.

Those of us who practice a particular faith or religion often find ourselves able to connect more strongly than ever to the ideas that we knew and trusted all along. As a result of working the Steps (which allow us to sweep away the debris that had been blocking us), we are finally able to live according to the faith we always knew was right for us.

Those of us who do not come from a tradition or practice of faith need not find Step Eleven especially problematic. We remind ourselves that "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.*

No matter what ideas we start with, Step Eleven reminds us that we derive the power of perspective from focusing on something, or some One, greater than ourselves. Some of us simply care for ourselves so we can be free to turn our attention to causes that matter to us. Some of us understand God as the power of love. Some of us find joy and peace through recognizing and dedicating our lives to God as we understand Him from the Bible, Torah, or Qur'an. Others of us leverage Eastern meditation practices, building on every effort to love, honor, and respect ourselves, because we believe that God lives within us—as us. 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.

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. Step Ten helps us establish integrity: we learn to be true to ourselves through our daily inventory. Step Eleven then helps us establish and grow our relationships of trust, whether we start with trust in God, in the power of love, or in the idea that we can organize our time and energy to serve a purpose about which we care deeply.

¹² All material on this page references *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. (2016), Carlsbad, CA: General Service Board of EDA, Inc., 192-198.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop

Step Eleven

Step Eleven: 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.

Regardless of our position on matters of faith, all of us have come to understand that we are here to serve others. We think it helpful to consider what service really means. A good example is the prayer from St. Francis of Assisi (also known as the 11th Step Prayer).

Please read the 11th Step prayer (pages 194-195 in the EDA Big Book) or the alternative statement (pages 195-196).

Write out the main ideas expressed in the 11th Step prayer and alternative statement, in your own words, as succinctly as possible:

One purpose of Step Eleven is to help us connect lofty ideas to our daily realities. When we take care of our own basic needs, and then make a concerted effort to put into practice the unselfish ideas expressed above, we soon see for ourselves that *the process does work*.

As we keep this up, we find that love—our passion for what is good and right, or our love of God—is the driving force in life, and in recovery. Our willingness to put the power of our love into serving something greater than ourselves makes life worth living.

Our capacity to be genuinely helpful expands as we look for ways to bring peace and joy to others.

Just as working the prior steps clears away the obstacles to a relationship with God, our Higher Power, or our higher purpose, working *Step Eleven enables us to form deeper and more authentic connections with everyone*. We are able to love people exactly as they are—without unreasonable expectations—when our peace and power comes from something greater than ourselves.

Working Step Eleven can consistently resolve even the most complicated relationships and enhance our most intimate ones. By relying on a power or purpose greater than ourselves to frame up our experiences, we can embrace the physicality of our bodies, the power and intensity of our emotions, and connections of trust—free of fear—with deep love, joy, and delight that had never seemed possible for us before. We can be free at last.

Many sponsors encourage their sponsees to start working Steps Ten and Eleven as soon as they possibly can, usually right after taking Step Three. We are less likely to be vulnerable to triggers—and more likely to be successful in working Steps Four through Nine—when engaged in daily practices that bring peace and perspective.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop Step Twelve

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.

In the course of working the first eleven Steps, we will certainly have undergone a fundamental transformation, an experience most of us describe as a spiritual awakening.¹³

Although we are the same people as before, we are now on new footing with life. We have faced our issues, made a good start at correcting the mistakes in our thinking, and are engaged in making restitution for the damage we caused. 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. We need not hold ourselves back from life.

Instead of being sidelined by our issues, we now *make use of them to help others*. Practical experience has shown us that nothing ensures continued freedom from an eating disorder as much as working with people who still have one.

Chapter 7 of the AA text, which is also titled “Working with Others,” describes what it’s like to share our experience, strength, and hope with others who are afflicted as we once were, and our results have been exactly the same:

*Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.*¹⁴

*Helping others is the foundation of our recovery. A kindly act once in a while is not enough.*¹⁵

General Principles for Working with Others

- Our only aim is to be helpful. We may question, but never criticize, any of the information or responses we may get from those we wish to help. Every conception of God, a Higher Power, or a higher purpose can work effectively if resolutely relied upon to provide the needed perspective and peace.
- We are honest about our own stories and we empathize with the stories of others. When we do this, we find that our present as well as past experiences provide insights that help us connect with others. There is common ground not only in our former eating-disordered patterns, but also in our emotional responses to life.
- We emphatically assure everyone suffering with an eating disorder that they can get well *regardless of anyone or anything*. The only conditions are that they:
 - Practice reliance on their own conception of God, a Higher Power, or a higher purpose
 - Own up to their own mistakes, past and present—and make amends where needed
 - Do their best to behave with integrity and dignity in current situations.

¹³ All material on this page and the next references *Eating Disorders Anonymous*. (2016), Carlsbad, CA: General Service Board of EDA, Inc., 199-237.

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

¹⁴ *Alcoholics Anonymous*. (2001) New York, NY: AA World Services, Inc., 89.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

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EDA Big Book Step Workshop

Step Twelve

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.

- We listen patiently when a sponsee blames anyone else (e.g. family members, employers, creditors, institutions, or society as a whole) for their emotional states or for their eating behaviors, even if there is plenty wrong with what these others may have done or may still be doing. We never criticize; we empathize. Yet, while bullying, teasing, abuse, and societal pressures are certainly factors in the development of our eating disorders, *focusing on the errors of other people never helps anyone recover*. Gently remind sponsees that blaming others for our attitudes and actions undermines our accountability and responsibility as adults.
- We encourage sponsees to focus on what they think a person with integrity and dignity would do in each situation, and guide them to accept their part in any conflict.
- We allow sponsees to work directly with life situations as they are, rather than trying to “fix things” for them; doing so would deprive them of the opportunity to grow and mature in recovery. An exception is when a sponsee’s situation is not physically safe. In that case, our first objective is to do everything we can to help them get out of harm’s way. We will make little headway with people whose safety is truly an issue.
- Let newcomers share their experiences with you. This is valuable, because not only does it validate their thoughts and feelings, but it also shows you how best to approach them when introducing ideas that might be unfamiliar or might conflict with theirs.
- Share some of your own experiences of an eating disorder. If a newcomer shows interest in the EDA program, go ahead and share a short version of your own story, but do not go overboard with sharing: you may lose them if you show an overabundance of enthusiasm.
- Follow the EDA Big Book’s Chapter 7 outline for taking someone through the Steps of EDA (pages 208-237).
- As you work the Steps with a newcomer, share your own experiences with each Step. It helps to normalize the experience, providing encouragement and perspective.
- A sponsor need not have all the answers. We offer our experience, strength, and hope where we have it, and demonstrate humility where we do not. In the latter case, finding someone with more relevant experience to serve as a resource may be the best option.
- Model the behavior you hope your sponsee will adopt. We are always examples to one another.
- Be mindful of the idea that we are all equals. Sponsees know themselves better than you do. Be suggestive rather than directive.
- If a newcomer does not express much interest, or a sponsee loses interest in working the Steps, move on to help someone else. We are not on a quest to save people from their eating disorders.
- When a sponsee has finished Steps One through Eight, has made significant progress in making amends, and has adopted a daily practice of Steps Ten and Eleven, encourage them start sponsoring others. If your sponsee is not situated where they can sponsor locally, suggest they join an EDA online or phone meeting, or write to sponsors@eatingdisordersanonymous.org and offer to serve as a sponsor. Working with others should now be a key focus, as it will help your sponsee solidify the positive habits of thought and action they have acquired through working the Steps.

We know that sharing your journey with others will be for you what it has turned out to be for us: a wonderful opportunity to turn a life of pain and misery into one that inspires others through honesty, integrity, compassion, and hope.

We hope we cross paths with you as we journey through life in recovery together!

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