

FROM SURVIVE TO THRIVE

A resource for recovering from an eating disorder, written by those with lived experience



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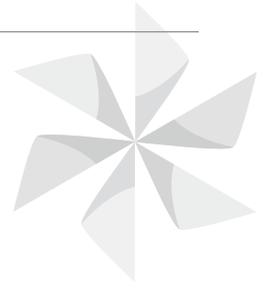
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Disclaimer

The *From Survive to Thrive* (the “Guide”) is intended to provide information as an aid to people struggling with eating disorders to help in the development of healthy strategies to overcome these disorders. The Guide was written by individuals who have experienced an eating disorder and the Guide contains their suggestions on how to reduce disordered eating behaviours. The Guide is not intended as a substitute for the advice of an appropriate health care professional and no person may rely upon any information contained in the Guide for any reason whatsoever. If professional advice is required, the services of a competent and qualified professional should be sought. Decision-making in a specific context remains the responsibility of attending professionals. Nothing contained in the Guide should in any way be construed as being either official or unofficial policy of British Columbia Mental Health Society Branch, Children’s & Women Health Centre of British Columbia Branch or Provincial Health Services Authority (together the “Societies”). The Societies assume no responsibility or liability arising from any error in or omission of information or from the use of any information, link, contact, opinion or advice provided in the Guide.



Introduction



“Recovery takes time, patience, enormous effort, and strength. We all have those things. It’s a matter of choosing to use them to save our own lives – to survive – but beyond that, to thrive.”

- Anonymous

You may be reading this because you are navigating your way through recovery, but are tired of the “textbook” answers to everything, or are feeling like nobody “gets” you or what you’re going through. This guide is written by individuals with firsthand experience of struggling with an eating disorder or body image and eating issues. Contributors to this resource have provided basic information and practical advice on how to overcome challenges that are common during the recovery process. The guide is divided into 7 chapters, all addressing questions which people with eating disorders often ask. It features advice, tools, tips, and strategies on coping with and recovering from an eating disorder. We hope by reading this, you will gain some insight, understanding, and control over your lives. Recovery is possible.



CHAPTER 1: BODY IMAGE

Body image is how you view your physical self, including whether you feel you are attractive and what you believe others think about how you look. Some people think they need to change how they look in order to feel good about themselves, but what you need to do is change the way you see, think, and feel about your body.

1. What is having a positive body image?

Many people wake up every morning disliking their bodies. Not only does this make you feel bad and lower your self-esteem, it can lead to dangerous habits. Here are some ideas of what it means to have a positive body image:

ACCEPTANCE

- Accepting yourself at a natural weight (i.e. when eating and exercising normally without disordered eating behaviours).
- Realizing that perfect does not exist.
- Being aware of your body and accepting your shape.
- Loving your body and yourself as you are in this moment today.
- Loving yourself no matter what your size is. Not having judgment about self. Self-love. Self-acceptance. Self-care.

1. What is having a positive body image? *(continued)*



ACCEPTANCE *(continued)*

- Being able to look at yourself and say, “Yes, I am a good person who deserves love JUST the way I am.”
- Being able to be naked and not have negative thoughts or fears about your body.
- Knowing that our worth can’t be measured by any number. No inches, pounds or calories can possibly sum up the importance of one person.
- Looking at your body with respect and celebrating what nature has given you.
- Not judging yourself solely based on your weight or size, and recognizing that other aspects of your personality rather than your weight should be the source of your self-esteem.
- Being proud of yourself for something other than the size of your clothes or a number on a scale.
- Feeling comfortable in your own body and not relying on clothing sizes, a scale, or a mirror as ways to measure how you look.
- Acknowledging that your body is not perfect and it will never be exactly how you want it, but at the same time accepting it and loving it and taking care of it.
- Accepting that you have no control over what your body looks like when it is at a place of health.

“When you love yourself and you accept your imperfections. This doesn’t mean that you don’t have a ‘fat’ day or feel self-conscious about something, but when you feel these emotions you recognize them and it doesn’t affect your ability to function in life.”

“To be content in one’s body. To have a healthy view of exercise and eating habits.”

“It means spending less time in the morning trying on clothing worried that you won’t look ok. It’s about accepting who you are, and your own strengths and weaknesses as separate from the body that you reside in. It’s about love for yourself. It’s about appreciating what your body does for you, and not admonishing it for what you perceive to be failures.”

1. What is having a positive body image? *(continued)*

BEING GOOD TO YOUR BODY

- Taking care of your body.
- Working on reconnecting with the body you live in.
- Feeling healthy is more important than just looking “good on the outside” – and understanding that both can happen at the same time.
- Treating your body well (eating regularly, exercising moderately, practicing acceptance/mindfulness).

“I am in gratitude for the body I have been given to work with in this particular lifetime. It is perfect for me, at my particular stage of personal evolution through eternity. I act on the truth that my body is what I make it within reasonable, sensible limits. I joyfully accept the limitations of this particular body because it's WHAT I HAVE TO WORK WITH. I know that bodies come in ALL SHAPES AND SIZES. I make the best of my body whenever I have the power to do so.”

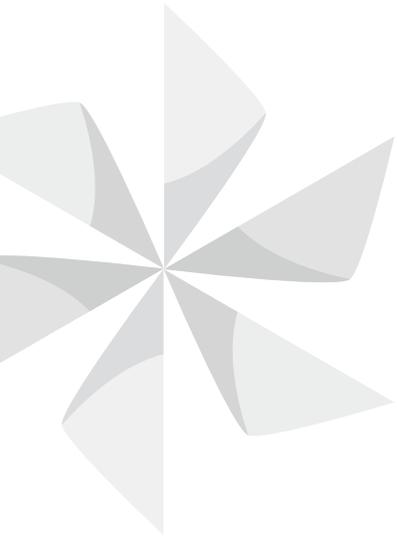
“A positive body image is being able to see your body for what it can do, rather than what it looks like. It is being able to accept the flaws as what makes you unique and beautiful (as corny as that sounds). Seriously though, how boring would it be if we all looked the same? You don't want that. You want to look like beautiful amazing you!”

2. How can I begin to accept my own body?

While it may be easy to accept your friend's body, it's much harder to accept your own. But you can begin to appreciate, accept, and yes, even love your own body! Here are some tips on ways to begin to accept your own body:

REGULATE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Avoid comparing yourself to others by removing "thin ideal" media images from immediate access.
- Stay away from mirrors, and avoid staring at yourself in them for too long or picking at yourself in front of them.
- Dress your body in clothes that fit well (regardless of your size) and that make you feel confident. Buy comfortable, well fitting clothes that fit YOUR body, not ones that you want to fit into. This reduces the feeling of your body not being "thin" enough.
- Don't rely on others to compliment you, learn to compliment yourself. Only you can determine how you feel about your body image. Start by complimenting at least one thing about yourself each day whether it's your smile, or that you're having a good hair day.
- Avoid getting involved in discussions about weight and appearance.
- Put post-its around the bathroom on mirrors that say things like "You are beautiful" and just encourage positivity towards yourself.
- Focus on the qualities and attributes that you have and that you like about yourself.
- Find positive role models and surround yourself with people who talk positively about their bodies.
- Stay away from scales. STOP weighing yourself.



"It may start by selecting a body part that they like, such as their hair, or their hands...and asking themselves what that body part does for them, and why they like it."

"Focus on positive aspects about yourself not related to your appearance. Over time, once you are comfortable with who you are, you will begin to feel comfortable in your own body and accept it more."

2. How can I begin to accept my own body? *(continued)*

DISCOVER NEW PASSIONS AND ABILITIES

- Write down what your body is capable of doing for you and how amazing that is.
- Learn a craft, take a course you are interested in, or pursue an interest. Find ways to appreciate who you are.
- Volunteer or find other hobbies you enjoy.
- Make a list of things outside of your appearance that you like about yourself, and acknowledge all of your other positive qualities and talents.

THINK POSITIVELY

- Write down positive affirmations about yourself.
- Acknowledge and be mindful of all of the body's incredible functions.
- Understand how body image changed over the decades and through different cultures. Explore various definitions of beauty throughout different cultures and ages and recognize that the current standards are always changing and ultimately meaningless.
- Look at the variations across the population (go downtown and watch people) without judgment. Look for something beautiful in each person—this will make it easier to recognize and accept your own beauty.
- Each day, look in the mirror and say, “I am beautiful.” Even if you don't believe it at first, you will eventually!
- Say to yourself: “There is more to me than my body.”
- Realize only a very, very small percent of the population fit into the stereotypical notion of a supermodel.
- Notice that your negative thoughts are not reality. They are only thoughts, and only you can take their power away by not listening to them.
- Do not base your self-worth on your figure/appearance.

“I think the ‘set point theory’ really helped me – the idea that my body has a natural weight that it is most healthy at and that all my efforts to make it thinner than that are ultimately futile because it makes my body ineffective and unhealthy to do that. Knowing that I can lose all this weight but when I eventually have to eat more (or die) my body will spring back to its set point weight means in the end...you know it's kind of pointless.”



2. How can I begin to accept my own body? *(continued)*

"I think beginning to admire all the wonderful things your body can do is a big step forward. If you take care of it, your body can take you anywhere and everywhere and you can do so many things – climb mountains, run marathons, swim in oceans, have children, heal its wounds...and your mind too – you can do so much if you fuel your mind. I like to think of me and my body as a team – as long as I treat my body right, there isn't anything we can't do."

"I focus on things that I absolutely love about myself. It's really hard to do at first because all you see is what you hate about yourself. But as you incorporate more positive thoughts it becomes second nature and acceptance of your body is commonplace."



CHAPTER 2: BINGE EATING

Many healthy people who have never had an eating disorder overeat from time to time, like going for that second helping during a holiday dinner, even though we know we're already full. But for people who binge eat, the need to overeat happens very often, and the person usually feels out of control while they are doing it. People who binge may use food to cope with stress and other negative emotions. After bingeing, they may feel comforted for a while, but afterwards, they often feel upset, out of control and ashamed. If you're reading this and find yourself struggling with binge eating, know that you are not alone.

1. Why do I binge?

There are many reasons which can cause a person to binge. In a survey of over 200 people, we've asked the question why they feel the need to binge. Here are some of their responses:

NEGATIVE FEELINGS TOWARD SELF

- Low self-esteem.
- As a form of punishment.
- Self-judgment.
- Feeling unworthy.
- Self-hate.

1. Why do I binge? *(continued)*



ATTEMPTS TO COPE WITH FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

- Feeling overwhelmed, rejected or out of control.
- To cope with boredom.
- To numb feelings/fill an emotional void.
- As a way of seeking comfort, acceptance and love.
- Difficulty articulating thoughts and feelings.
- To cope with sadness, stress, anger, loneliness or depression.

EXTERNAL TRIGGERS

- Use of drugs or alcohol.
- Because of extreme hunger from having restricted food intake.

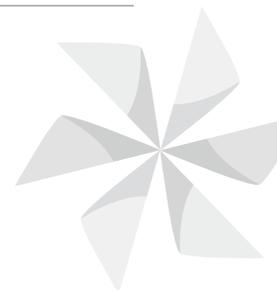
"I began binge eating when I attempted to starve or restrict calories. After being so demanding on myself with rules and dieting, I lost control and would eat compulsively to make up for my deprivation. This eating is close to impossible to stop."

"It's compulsive. When something in my life took an unexpected turn, like if someone cancelled plans on me or I received bad news, I would turn to food."

"I think for me it was a deep-seated loneliness, eating a lot of something soothing and sweets gave me comfort. At least while I was busy eating."

"I binge when I feel anxiety and stress. The act of eating makes the anxiety momentarily go away but it comes back even worse after bingeing because I feel very guilty that I've eaten so much. I am an emotional eater and I eat to suppress my emotions and deal with my anxiety disorder."

"I never really understood what caused me to binge eat. I could never figure out if I was having a bad day or struggling with something. What I learned when I went through the recovery process was that my urge to binge was strongest right before a meal. But in those moments I told myself, 'just eat your meal (as per my meal plan from my dietitian), nothing more, nothing less, and it will go away,' and every time it did. This made me realize that binge eating was brought on by me being hungry, and behaviours such as skipping meals worsened it."





2. How can I manage binge eating?

It can be difficult to overcome binge eating. Food is necessary for survival, so you don't have the option of avoiding it. Instead, it's important to develop a healthier relationship with food for meeting your nutritional – rather than emotional – needs. Here are some tips suggested by people who have overcome binge eating:

PRACTICE DISTRACTION AND/OR MINDFULNESS

- When you feel the urge to binge, distract yourself. Go for a walk, listen to music, knit, practice breathing exercises, etc.
- Be mindful, mentally and physically, of what is triggering the need to binge.
- Develop a distraction “tool kit” to use when the urge to binge comes.
- Use positive self-talk to discourage yourself from bingeing.

REGULATE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Don't let yourself get so hungry that you feel the need to binge.
- Try not to carry cash on you when you think you might be in danger of bingeing.
- Drink a glass of water, milk or juice to suppress the urge to binge.
- Avoid stressful conversations while eating.
- Eat a balanced, regular diet, and stay away from dieting.
- Chew each bite thoroughly before swallowing.
- Manage your portions by using containers in separate servings.
- Only eat at a table in a proper seated position.
- Maintain a manageable schedule to keep from feeling overwhelmed.
- Call a friend and avoid being alone while eating.

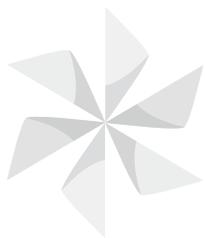
“I find that I binge less in periods where my anxiety and stress are under control. This is affected by many factors: school/work stress, relationship stress, the weather, level of exercise, etc. If I can keep my life balanced then I do not binge – on the other hand, bingeing occurs frequently when I feel anxiety. At that point, I have to step back and examine what is causing me to feel this way and attempt different methods for fixing my stress and anxiety levels.”

“The biggest step for me in reducing binge eating was to ensure that I was nourishing myself sufficiently during the day – 90% of my urges disappeared once I did this. I also let go of all food restriction – quantity and variety. I had to truly accept that there are no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ foods, and allow myself whatever my body craved within moderation.”

2. How can I manage binge eating? *(continued)*

"I find that awareness is key to recovery: Why am I grabbing this? What will this do for me? What am I afraid to feel or express? What void am I trying to fill?"

"I had to find out what my triggers were. If you are like me and having a hard time detecting these triggers, talking to a trained professional (counsellor/ therapist/psychologist/psychiatrist) and allowing them to assist you in working through these thoughts and emotions can help you discover why you have developed this coping mechanism, and teach you new ways to cope."



CHAPTER 3: PURGING

Purging means getting rid of food that was just eaten by forcing it out of the body quickly. Many people with eating disorders purge as a way to get rid of the calories they've just eaten, trying to prevent themselves from gaining weight. Like other types of eating disorders, purging is physically damaging to the body and can be a vicious cycle which is difficult to break. If you have questions about purging, continue reading on for answers.

1. Why do I purge?

There is no easy answer to the question of why a person might purge. It is caused by a combination of factors including, but not limited to, culture, family, personality, genetics, biology, and trauma. Some of the reasons people said they purged were:

TO REGULATE FEELINGS OR EMOTIONS

- To feel the “high” associated with getting rid of calories.
- Because you feel undeserving of eating or enjoying food.
- To cope with feelings of self-judgment, self-hatred, guilt or shame.
- To cope with the physical discomfort caused by eating.
- As a way to relieve stress and other unpleasant emotions.
- Because you feel that purging gives you permission to eat more.

1. Why do I purge? *(continued)*

TO REGULATE FEELINGS OR EMOTIONS *(continued)*

- To feel accomplished and in control .
- Because you are afraid that you will gain weight from the food you've just eaten.
- To punish yourself for eating "wrong" or "unsafe" foods.

"Eating more than you normally would to appease people that care about you, and then not being able to handle (physically and emotionally) the food sitting in your stomach."

"Purging seems like a freebie...you can enjoy the comfort of eating to fill that hole of discomfort and pain that promoted the disorder, and think you will not have consequences with gaining weight."

"It is a release of stress; to express feelings that you cannot express in your daily life; something only you can control until it controls you; to feel free of guilt put upon you; to dispose of the ugliness you feel inside from negative messages that have been told to you, to get rid of calories after enjoying a meal."

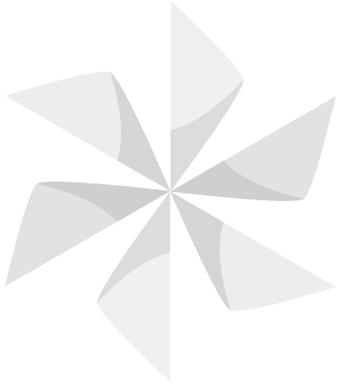
2. How can I manage purging?

You might still remain trapped in the destructive cycle of purging, and you may incorrectly believe that purging helps you to lose - or at least maintain, weight. It is good to start to have a better understanding of the reasons why purging doesn't work, and the extremely harmful side effects it causes. Here are some tips to manage purging:

REGULATE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Get out of the house (go for a walk or go see a friend).
- Delay the action by 5 minutes, and then another 5 minutes.
- Have a meal plan. Eat small, balanced meals throughout the day so that you reduce the chances that you will feel too full or like you've eaten "too much."
- Do your best to identify what made you purge in the first place so that you can avoid triggers in the future.
- Distract yourself (play a game of cards, knit, journal, meditate, etc.).
- Put sticky notes EVERYWHERE (even under your toilet seat!) to remind you that this is NOT what you want to be doing.

2. How can I manage purging? *(continued)*



THINK POSITIVELY AND REFLECT

- Focus on all of the good things that food does for your body.
- Do your best to recognize what made you want to purge in the first place.
- Remind yourself that purging will not eliminate the past and that it can harm your body in the long term. Purging does much damage not only to your internal body, but can also have negative effects on visible body parts, such as tooth damage or water retention.
- Ask yourself, “Is this really going to solve my problems?”
- Remind yourself that the urge to purge will eventually pass.
- Know that we all make “mistakes” and that just because you binge doesn't mean you need to undo it or punish yourself by purging.
- Be kind to yourself. Practice self-compassion.
- Remind yourself that even if you've eaten a significant amount of food, you will not get fat that instant.
- Remind yourself that this purge will make you more prone to another binge episode by throwing off your nutritional balance.
- Write a pros and cons list measuring what you are going to “get” out of purging and keep that in mind when you feel like purging. Write down a list of all the good things in your life, including people, animals, etc.
- If you are purging because of anxiety, work on tuning in to that anxiety and asking the question, “Why am I really anxious?” “What in my life is bothering me?”

SEEK SUPPORT

- Have someone follow you to the washroom after your meal.
- Let people know that you struggle, and that you may need help to stop yourself from purging.
- Don't isolate yourself – stay around people for at least one hour after eating.



DISTRACT YOURSELF

- Go for a walk after a meal instead of purging.
- Practice self-care to help ease discomfort after eating, such as using a hot water bottle.
- Do something to keep your mind off purging – finger paint, meditate, knit, draw, clean, do arts and crafts, write a letter, etc.
- Get out of the house.



2. How can I manage purging? *(continued)*

“Following a meal plan. No surprises in what I have to eat has helped in maintaining a clear head, and knowing that I am getting what my nutritionist has decided is necessary (no more or less) helps to lower some of the feelings of guilt and anxiety after I have eaten as well.”

“After meals, make sure you do something with someone. Play a board game with family, go out with friends, go somewhere public where you can’t purge. And keep reminding yourself just how terrible it is for your poor, poor body. I mean, if your friend doesn’t deserve to have rotting teeth and a burned out esophagus then neither do you. STOP. No you really don’t. No matter what you think, you don’t deserve that. You are worth just as much as him or her. You really, really are.”

“Bingeing and purging are very antisocial and solitary activities. I needed to restore and make new friends, and do activities that made me feel happy and good about myself.”

“This is difficult to manage, especially if you are alone. I recommend telling someone you trust that you have purging tendencies. If you feel the need to purge, call that person. If you cannot control it and you purge, come clean to that person and tell them what happened. It makes you feel a sense of responsibility towards the act and it makes you want to change. The person that I tell does not judge me when I purge, they talk me through my emotions and what caused the bingeing and purging and it makes me feel stronger and I feel like I can avoid purging the next time. This has been extremely effective in my case.”



CHAPTER 4: RESTRICTING

When we focus on calories and losing weight, things can quickly spiral out of control. Reducing or eliminating food items or food groups from one's diet can lead to mental, physical, and psychological complications. Here are some commonly asked questions regarding restriction.

1. Why is it so hard for me to eat?

Being in recovery and learning how to eat again can be difficult, especially since other physical and emotional issues are likely to come up during the process. Below are some reasons why it may be difficult for you to eat:

DIFFICULT FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

- When you are feeling self-conscious, or have low self-esteem, restricting can temporarily make you feel better about yourself; it can feel empowering, like an accomplishment.
- You may use restricting as a way to cope with difficult emotions or life changes, such as feeling depressed, stressed or anxious, or having parents that are going through a divorce.
- You may use restriction as a way to deal with pressure from peers, school, work, etc. This can include self-imposed pressure to be perfect (i.e. perfectionism).

1. Why is it so hard for me to eat? *(continued)*

DIFFICULT FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS *(continued)*

- The eating disorder voice telling you that if you eat, you are a failure.
- Fear of people watching you, and judging what you eat.
- Not trusting yourself to stop eating if you start.
- Experiencing feelings of anxiety and panic when you eat or think about eating.
- Fear of losing control.
- Feeling undeserving of food and not wanting to nourish your body.
- Feeling shame, embarrassment and self-judgment when you eat.
- Using restricting as a way to punish yourself.

“Our culture rewards being thin. Despite the efforts (and it is getting a lot better) thin is associated with beautiful. Therefore when you restrict/diet you feel good because you believe you are bettering yourself. It is also a sense of control. It is also very difficult for a person with an eating disorder to eat ‘normal.’ Eating becomes a task that you hate and food becomes a nightmare that you biologically need to survive. An alcoholic can avoid alcohol, a smoker can live without cigarettes but a person with an eating disorder is confronted with their vice every day. It’s almost like a phobia that you have to battle 3-4 times a day.”

“Once I lost enough weight for people at school to notice - even people who weren’t my friends and I had never spoken to - I began to think it was expected of me. I was ‘the anorexic girl’ and I felt people would laugh at me or think I was a fraud if they ever saw me eating. I felt like I couldn’t possibly eat around anyone in case people took my problems less seriously. I also became convinced that the only way to be successful was to attain a certain weight. I had no idea what that weight was, only that it was less than my weight at the time. The longer you go without eating enough, the harder it becomes. The anxiety around food builds, the fear builds and it gets so much harder to start eating again.”

“I found once I lost weight, my family noticed me, and people around me did too, and at the time, I loved it.”

PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT AND LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

- After restricting for so long, the feeling of being full can be very uncomfortable.
- Not having routine eating times, and not being able to recognize hunger cues.

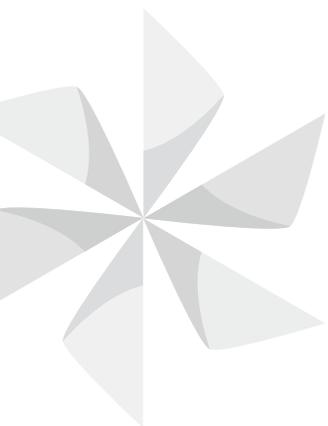
1. Why is it so hard for me to eat? *(continued)*

PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT AND LACK OF KNOWLEDGE *(continued)*

- Lack of nutrition education, such as not knowing how to shop, plan a menu or cook a recipe.
- Having digestion problems which make you feel sick when you eat.

“After not eating for so long, to start eating again can be very difficult. Even though you may want to, the thoughts in your head saying ‘no’ are strong. It’s a constant battle. The result of eating a ‘normal’ meal again (e.g. bloating, feeling sick) also play on your mind, and it doesn’t feel worth it for the pain and discomfort.”

2. How can I begin eating normally?



“I tried planning for one meal a day, then I worked my way to two, but it never lasted. I think you need to face ED head-on, plan three meals a day, write them out, share them with your support system, eat with your supports and be prepared for ED to fight back hard. It sucks, it’s hard, but that’s why you have to do it.”

The inner voices of an eating disorder might whisper that you should not eat. But the truth is, freedom is only possible with eating. Here are some tips that helped others begin eating again:

START SMALL AND REGULATE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Space out meals and snacks so your stomach is not too overwhelmed with the food.
- Build a routine around eating and do your best to stick to it.
- Start with small meals and work your way up.
- Stick with “safe” foods to begin with and then introduce more slowly.
- Eat in a safe, calming place.
- Eat with others.
- Set small, realistic goals for yourself, and work towards them.
- First incorporate foods that you aren’t “scared” of, and gradually include more and more of those in your daily regimen. With time, you will be able to face your fear of foods that may be coined “bad.”
- Have meaningful spare time to distract yourself during or after each meal or snack. You can distract yourself by watching TV, playing cards or listening to the radio while you eat.

2. How can I begin eating normally? *(continued)*

“Receive counselling in order to have one-on-one support to deal with the challenges you face, to learn tools for decreasing anxiety and to learn how to love yourself.”

SEEK SUPPORT

- Don’t be afraid to ask for support when you need it.
- Have a close friend sit with you while you eat and tell you that it’s going to be okay.
- Work with a dietitian or other professionals to create a meal plan for yourself.
- Have someone who knows how to recognize your “tricks” or strategies to avoid eating certain foods, and know how to access that person in times of major struggle.

“Something bigger than the eating disorder needs to arise. Sometimes this is hope, a life event, or you hit rock bottom. Once you are ready to get better, it is very helpful to work with a supportive team.”

THINK POSITIVELY

- Remind yourself that one meal won't make you gain a huge amount of weight.
- Practice self-compassion and self-care.
- Remind yourself that you might feel physically sick, but it will pass as your body gets used to food again.
- Let go of guilt around food.
- Challenge fat thoughts.
- Remind yourself that you are doing this for your health and longevity, that you want to have a life worth living.
- Stop attaching value judgments to food.

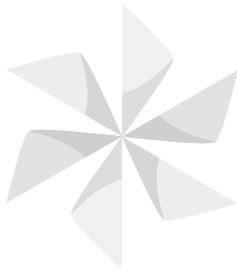
“Tell yourself that your body needs nourishment in order to function and it is designed to eat food for fuel – it is a gift to your body to eat and provide it with food and water.”

“Have a little bit of something you like, in a place you like, with people you like. And then have more.”



3. What are the ways to manage anxiety around eating?

For someone struggling with an eating disorder, just thinking about food and eating can cause anxiety. Learning more effective ways to deal with your anxiety is a key component in recovery and to helping make eating enjoyable again. Here are some strategies to manage your anxiety around eating:



REGULATE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Practice deep breathing.
- Recognize the triggers to anxiety with food and make an effort to avoid them. Avoid conversation related to weight, body size, health, beauty or physical appearance during meals.
- Don't let yourself look at the packaging/nutritional facts, or obsess over numbers and measurements.
- Allow others to take care of portions and servings.

"I read a book or newspaper during meals so that I can lose myself in that and not focus too much on my meal or feelings just in case it makes me stop eating the meal."

DISTRACT YOURSELF

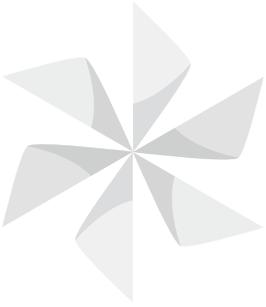
- Keep yourself distracted. Read, watch TV, talk, play cards, or listen to music to take your mind off what you are eating.
- Do something soothing before and after you eat to remain calm.
- Find other activities to do before and after eating.



SEEK SUPPORT

- Tell people about the anxiety you are experiencing. Talk through it; communicate how you're feeling and why.
- Form a support network or go to support groups and share your experiences to gain insight and help in a safe environment.
- Participate in a program that has monitored eating so that there are other people who experience the same feelings. Knowing you're not alone is a big thing.
- See a counsellor and work through the anxiety issues.
- Don't isolate yourself. Avoid being alone during and after eating.

3. What are ways to manage anxiety around eating? *(continued)*



THINK POSITIVELY

- List ways that your body is strong. Remind yourself that you will have a strong, healthy, body and mind from consuming delicious foods.
- Congratulate yourself every time you take a bite. Think about what you were able to accomplish and celebrate that. Don't think of what you weren't able to do and punish yourself.
- Write down positive affirmations and have them next to you when you eat. Tell yourself, "You deserve it," "It's okay," or "Love yourself." Self love is a huge component!

"Listen to music. Buy a special plate and utensils that are cool, and are yours. Have someone with you, if helpful. Take time, and try to be relaxed. Reward yourself. Think of what you were able to accomplish and celebrate that. Don't think of what you weren't able to do and punish yourself."

"Talk about it [the anxiety] during the meal. Name it. It loses some of its power if you let it know that you know it's there and that you're just going to let it be."

"If you open up to your friends, you will see that everyone has some problems when it comes to body image and eating habits. Once you see that you're not alone, you can form a support network."



CHAPTER 5: OVER-EXERCISING

While regular, pleasurable exercise is good for you, it is possible to exercise more than is healthy, especially if you aren't feeding your body properly at the same time. For some people, exercising can become a compulsion – something they feel they NEED to do, either to feel in control, or as a way to deal with self-esteem or body image issues. Intense, unrelenting exercise habits can be very dangerous to your health.

1. Why do I over-exercise?

Exercise is a part of a healthy lifestyle. But while a little exercise is a good thing, taking exercise to the extreme can cause serious health issues. Part of your eating disorder may make you feel compelled to exercise above and beyond normal levels. Here are some reasons why you may be over-exercising:

DIFFICULT FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

- To manage depression.
- To manage anger.
- To feel an endorphin rush.
- To distract yourself from problems.

1. Why do I over-exercise? *(continued)*



DIFFICULT FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS *(continued)*

- To relieve stress, anxiety and pressure.
- You feel lonely.
- To release pain.
- You feel guilty for over-eating or bingeing.
- You have a fear of losing control.
- To numb out feelings.
- You are afraid of weight gain.
- Self-hatred/self-disgust.
- Poor body image.
- Self-judgment.
- You never feel like you're good enough.
- As a form of punishment.

WEIGHT LOSS

- To purge calories or make up for calories consumed.
- As a form of competition to be thinner and lose more weight.

"I over-exercise to counter the amount of food I eat. This happens particularly after bingeing. Unfortunately, exercise then becomes reactive rather than proactive and you feel guilty if you miss a workout or if you don't exercise enough. It becomes addictive to keep working out harder and more often. At one point in my life, I worked out to the point where I was completely burned out and I couldn't keep up with it anymore. I was trying so hard to lose weight and the exercise wasn't working like I wanted it to so I kept increasing it until I couldn't go on anymore."

"[I] don't want to literally purge, [I] want to burn away bad memories."

"Feeling lack of some personal need that is fulfilled/distracted with over-exercising."



2. How can I manage over-exercising?



Over-exercising can take a very big toll on your quality of life, among other things. If you are struggling with over-exercising, here are some tips to overcome this:

REGULATE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- Vary your routine and have a scheduled/structured time for exercise which you do not exceed.
- Force yourself to avoid gyms/exercise gear.
- Join exercise classes that stop after an hour.
- Focus on fun, group-based exercise (baseball, yoga, nature walks, etc.) that isn't as physically demanding.
- Focus on balancing your exercise schedule with other activities, like social events or work.
- Baby steps - start decreasing the number and length of your workouts slowly.

"Limit the amount you allow yourself to do until it's a healthy amount. If you are able to reduce it but fear you won't be able to for long periods of time, stopping all together is another alternative."

"To manage over-exercising, an individual can compose a list of alternative activities in place of exercise. This can be taking a walk in the neighborhood (not focusing on the distance but rather focusing on one's surroundings), reading a book, listening to music, having a cup of tea with a friend or family member. The person may want to schedule certain activities ahead of time so they can reduce the urges to exercise every day."

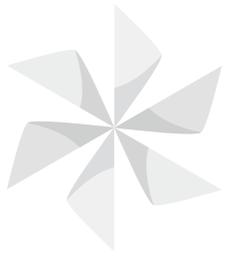


SEEK SUPPORT

- Talk to people. Put a voice to your thoughts about why you over-exercise.
- Exercise with a friend.
- Ask for help/therapy.
- Tell someone about your over-exercising, as a way to hold yourself accountable to them.

THINK POSITIVELY AND PRACTICE SELF-CARE

- Address your discomfort with not exercising by using support, meditation, soothing music, puzzles, etc.
- Challenge harmful attitudes and values.



THINK POSITIVELY AND PRACTICE SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Drop the competitive factor and just live for yourself.
- Learn about and practice self-acceptance.
- Make a pros/cons list for exercising in general – really find out if the motives are rationally-based or ED-based.
- Learn to love yourself and practice self-care.
- Be aware of your own thought patterns and have tools to cope with any negative self-talk.
- Practice self-reflection – write in a journal and document your exercise.

“I had to realize that exercise is not a punishment nor is it a tool for losing weight. Exercise is for becoming or staying healthy. It should be something enjoyable. I used to do only cardio at the gym – now that I’ve tried yoga, I feel that my mindset about exercise is changing and I can see it as a tool for healthy living, as it strengthens your body and allows you to relax and self-reflect.”

“Changing my attitude and saying ‘More IS NOT better,’ especially when it comes to exercise. It is actually detrimental to a realistic health goal. I did a lot of researching and self-educating, and after I realized what I was doing to myself, I had to slow it down. It was hard to just stop, and I would never suggest that. Instead of going to the gym for my regular long hours, I cut some gym time out and went outdoors for a more moderate exercise like hiking and enjoying my surroundings instead of again punishing myself, which is what I did at the gym.”



CHAPTER 6: SOCIAL SITUATIONS

Everyone has encountered a negative or difficult social situation at some point in their life. Whether it be with your parents, friends, or anybody else, it's how you cope with and move beyond these moments that makes the difference between wanting to become invisible under the perceived glare of others, and simply brushing it off and moving on.

1. Why is my family hassling me?



It's not unusual for young people to feel like their parents or other members of their family are constantly nagging them or trying to interfere with their lives. But this tendency can become even worse when your family sees that you are struggling. Here are some reasons why your family may be hassling you:

WORRY

- They feel a lack of control of the situation, and want to find a way to control it.
- They are scared and don't know how else to express it.
- They feel helpless to make things better for you.
- They fear they will lose you.
- They are fearful and anxious about what might happen to you.

1. Why is my family hassling me? *(continued)*



MISUNDERSTANDING

- Some parents may not fully understand what an eating disorder is and what you are going through. They think that if they can just get you to eat, everything will be okay.
- They may not be able to relate to your feelings or behaviours, but they want to understand you better so they can help you.
- They may have a different view of the issue from your own because they have not had the same experiences.
- There may be a lack of communication between you and your parents. They may not be listening to what you are saying.
- They may not understand the benefit of seeking professional help.

LOVE

- They act the way they do out of love, as an attempt to get you back to a healthier state.
- They care about your well-being.
- They just want to keep you safe.

“When I still lived with my parents, I was extremely frustrated with how they always wanted to know what I was doing or even control the things I would do. I needed more independence from them. The reason for them acting this way is simple - they are trying to set you on the right path. However, the way they see things is not always the same as you do, so it becomes frustrating.”

2. How can I handle conflicts with my parents and/or family?

Parents and family members can sometimes be frustrating; you may even feel that they are a bit suffocating at times. But our families will always be in our lives, so it's best to seek out methods to learn how to cope and strengthen your relationships with them. Here are a few ways to work on reducing some of the conflicts you may be experiencing with your family:



2. How can I handle conflicts with my parents and/or family? *(continued)*



BUILD COMMUNICATION

- Sometimes a third party (such as a counsellor) can be helpful to ease the tension or clear any misunderstandings that may be happening frequently.
- Let your family know you care about them even if you don't like what they say to you sometimes.
- Set boundaries with your family and have them set boundaries with you.
- Tell your family exactly what bothers you. They can't read your mind and they can't understand, so unless you tell them what is wrong, it will continue.
- Be open with your family and allow them to share their opinions without taking it too personally.

EDUCATE YOUR FAMILY ON WHAT IS HELPFUL

- Recommend therapy or books to your family members so they are better able to understand what you're going through, and in turn become better equipped to help you.
- Educate your family on your eating issue.
- Suggest ways that your family members can support you.
- Ask your family to be non-judgmental supporters of your recovery. Emphasize that you would appreciate their help when asked, but to not be monitored constantly. Ask them to avoid diet talk and ruminations on poor body image. They may find that they benefit as well from the change!

BUILD YOUR RELATIONSHIP

- Engage in activities with your family members that do not involve food.
- Invite your family into your life, either in therapy or in smaller ways (e.g. going shopping, going to the nature centre, going for a gentle walk, sitting out in the sun, making a meal together).
- Go to family therapy to work on your relationships with your family, if needed.
- Have a space in the relationship where you can retreat when it becomes too overwhelming.
- Try to acknowledge and appreciate how much your family cares and how much they have done for you.
- Gently suggest that your family members see a counsellor for their own issues.

2. How can I handle conflicts with my parents and/or family? *(continued)*

UNDERSTAND YOUR FAMILY'S PERSPECTIVE

- Realize your family is just doing the best they can with the tools they have.
- Try to see your parents' point of view, and their concerns as well. Openness is key.
- Acknowledge how hard it must also be for your parents to see you struggle with your eating disorder.
- Try not to feel guilty for their feelings.

"Realize your parents are human and they are doing the best that they can. Here's a tip I found helpful in all relationships: Instead of focusing on what you dislike or what frustrates you about them, focus on the qualities you love. Because the qualities you focus on most will grow. So if you spend every day thinking about what you don't like about them you'll keep finding more and more to not like about them. But if you spend every day just focusing purely on what you love about them, that love for them will grow. Learn that the past is the past and forgive them for anything they have done (even if they don't apologize). Focus on the positives."

3. Why do I compare myself with others?

We all do it or have done it at some point in our lives: we compare ourselves to others. In doing this, we often end up judging ourselves too harshly. Here are some reasons why you may find yourself constantly comparing yourself to others:

LOW SELF-ESTEEM

- You are experiencing feelings of worthlessness.
- You feel inadequate.
- You think that others are better than you are.
- You are able to see the good in others but have a hard time seeing the good in yourself.

3. Why do I compare myself with others? *(continued)*

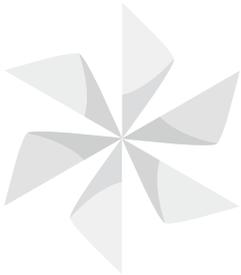
“Personally, I compare myself to others as a measure of my own self-worth. It serves as a way for me to constantly push myself to be ‘better’ (at work, school, socially, etc.). Clearly, this method is extremely unhelpful as it also forced me to become obsessive about physical appearance and to create a correlation between physical appearance and perceived success/achievement in life. Everyone thinks that the thinner someone is, the happier/smarter they are, but this is absolutely false.”

“The feeling of never being good enough, looking at someone and wishing you looked like them because you feel worthless and that person seems to have everything you don’t.”

“Society has hard standards to meet in terms of being successful, happy, accepted...I want to look like someone else, have their abs, their hair, their legs...I want to be like someone...as smart as them as funny as them.”

PRESSURE FROM SOCIETY AND MEDIA

- The media fills us with a barrage of what is “ideal” all the time, so comparison is forced upon us every day; it has become the cultural norm to compare ourselves to the perfect ideal of what society expects us to be.
- The perception that only people who are beautiful and thin can be also successful, happy, and healthy; this concept is perpetuated by the media, celebrities, family and friends.



DESIRE TO FIT IN

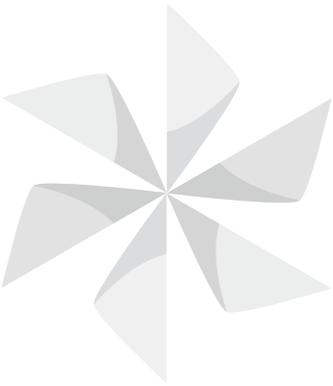
- Feeling disconnected from the real world, where not everyone is perfect, and everybody is different and unique.
- Perfectionism; wanting to be the best and look the best.
- Being in an environment where you are surrounded with other people with disordered eating, and not having the proper support to deal with those triggers in a healthy way.

“I compare myself with others because I am a perfectionist and I want to be the best. I want to look like certain people, I want to be as smart and successful as others, etc. Basically, if you lack self-esteem, you look at others who you admire and try to become like them.”

“Because modern life is all about competition these days: be the best in sports, be the best dressed, have the best marks, have the biggest group of friends, and especially to have the best body.”

4. How do I manage competition and comparing myself with others?

Even though we know we are all different, we still have a tendency to compare ourselves to others. This can be helpful at times when making decisions, but it can be very unhelpful if it is used to reinforce an unrealistic negative self-image. Here are some ways to manage comparing or competing with others.



INCREASE YOUR SELF-ESTEEM

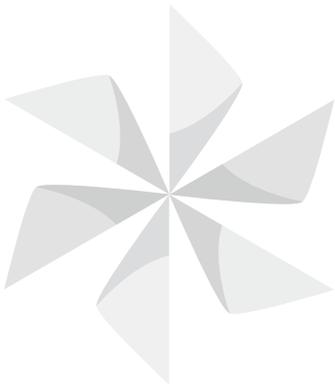
- Accept yourself for who you are so nobody's opinion affects you.
- Embrace your uniqueness.
- Practice not being so hard on yourself.
- Find something you are good at naturally and enjoy doing.
- Remind yourself that what you see in yourself is not what others see in you.
- Promise to treat yourself better.
- Realize that you are incomparable.
- Tell yourself that, "everyone is unique and beautiful in their own way."
- Remind yourself of previous accomplishments, current successes, and future goals. Make a list of the strengths you have, and what you can do in your life with these strengths.

"Try and remember all the good things you have that no one else has. It can be hard when your self-esteem is low, but you have to keep in mind that you are unique. Other people may have one or two of the same traits as you, but that combination of qualities you have is completely unique. It's what makes you, you. And that includes your flaws too. It's important to remember that everyone has strengths and weaknesses and that even if you aren't as good at school as your best friend, it doesn't matter, because they might be rubbish at dancing while you're really good at it. It's a pretty banal example, but I think that kind of thinking is important."

"Practice not being so hard on yourself; imagine saying what you say to yourself to your best friend. If you wouldn't say it or compare them then you shouldn't treat yourself that way either."

"Embrace your own unique qualities. Realize that you were made exactly the way you were meant to be. You are perfect the way you are."

"Take note of the accomplishments you have made and are working on making. Small victories! Learn to appreciate the little things you do."



"It is so important to surround yourself with friends who are non-judgmental and who love you the way you are."

THINK POSITIVELY

- Remind yourself that everyone still has their challenges.
- Understand that there is no right or wrong, just different.
- Acknowledge that competition is for sports or games, not for bodies.
- Acknowledge the impossibility of being the best at everything, or even a lot of things, and that there will always be someone better in the world.
- Remember that no two people in this world are alike and you are your own unique self.
- Practice thinking that it's what is under the surface that matters, and remind yourself that everyone has gone through different struggles to get where they are or have what they have.
- Acknowledge that everyone is made unique. Mentally, emotionally and physically. Recognizing that and capitalizing on your strengths will help.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH SUPPORT

- Look for people who have the same values as you, so that you don't get caught up in the negative outlook of others.
- Surround yourself with people who are not competitive and who are more interested in what is inside of you and what is important in life.

5. How can I tell my friends/family that I struggle with eating?

Whether your friends or family suspect that you have a problem with eating, or they are completely surprised, it will be difficult for them to hear how much you are struggling. But having this conversation will most definitely help you overcome these struggles. Here are some ways to begin the conversation:

HAVE A PLAN

- Go into the conversation with an end goal in mind: do you simply want this person to know about your eating disorder, or do you want them to help you in some way?
- Focus on feelings rather than behaviours when telling your family/friends.

5. How can I tell my friends/family that I struggle with eating? *(continued)*

HAVE A PLAN *(continued)*

- Write a letter or email if you feel too uncomfortable to talk in person.
- Put a pamphlet about eating disorders on the bed/desk of the person you would like to tell.
- Be direct, straightforward, and honest.
- Tell one person at a time.
- Tell your loved one that they may not understand what you are going through, but you would appreciate it if they would listen and perhaps do a bit of reading on the topic when they are ready.
- Choose the person you feel would be the most understanding and take it from there.
- Show the person you would like to tell an eating disorder support website and explain that you feel you are struggling with those issues.
- Write down what you want to say to prepare yourself.
- Call for a “meeting” (email/message/text) and from there, find time for a face to face conversation – just ask to talk. If they're really your friends/family, they will find time to listen.
- Say that you are struggling and really need their help and support. Name what you need (e.g. help finding resources, a friendly ear) and talk about your feelings if possible.
- Expect the other person to be confused, shocked, or angry, and stay patient if this does happen.
- You may need to repeat yourself in different ways and give examples. Talk about how this affects your life.

FIND A SAFE, COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

- Go for a walk with the person so you're not sitting face to face.
- Tell them in a non-meal type environment.
- Make sure you are in a comfortable place, the sooner the better... the longer you wait, the longer you have to struggle alone. Tell them you love them and need their support.
- Realize that there is no right or wrong way to tell your family or friends.

SEEK SUPPORT

- Speak to a counsellor and talk to them about strategies that would work.
- Ask for your doctor's assistance if it is too difficult for you to do alone.

5. How can I tell my friends/family that I struggle with eating? *(continued)*

“Words help. Be truthful. (Sometimes that’s shocking). Ask for support, maybe not in a direct way if that’s too much, but even in a way that eventually you’ll be able to tell them, like asking to have a meal together, or a snack, or even a coffee/tea.”

“Sometimes it can be very difficult to sit down and talk in person about one’s struggle with eating. A person could choose instead to write a letter to their family or friends. They may find it easier to communicate their thoughts more honestly. They also don’t have to worry about someone interrupting them to ask questions. They can follow up with the family or friend after they have read it.”

“There are many ways someone can tell their family, but it will only happen if they can accept that they have a problem and need help. They can only confide if they understand that the negative social stigma is just that, a social stigma. I feared telling my parents because I thought they would be mad/disappointed, and that others around me would laugh and call me stupid, crazy or otherwise. What people really need to know is that it’s okay to ask for help, any struggle is a struggle, and those who are trying to deal DESERVE to be heard, no matter what.”



CHAPTER 7: MESSAGES OF HOPE

1. Why I decided to recover



HITTING ROCK BOTTOM

- I was tired of feeling like the eating disorder was stealing my life.
- I felt completely emotionally and physically exhausted. I was tired of living a secretive life with no hope or happiness, and was fed-up and frustrated with the constant struggle.
- I realized I would die if things didn't change.
- I had nothing else to lose.

RECOGNIZING THAT I DESERVE MORE

- I wanted to be happy and free again.
- I wanted to live a long and happy life.
- I started to see the value of taking care of my own physical health.
- I knew that I deserved better, and was worth something more.
- I realized that life is so much more than a number and I'm worth more than that.

1. Why I decided to recover *(continued)*



HAVING GOALS AND DREAMS

- I realized how many of my goals weren't happening because of the eating disorder and I didn't want to let it get in the way anymore. I had things I wanted to do that weren't getting done because of the ED, and it was frustrating.
- I had goals for the future I wanted to achieve, but couldn't achieve them unless I got better.
- I realized how many great opportunities life has to offer me, and I will not let food or my weight ruin them for me.

SUPPORT FROM OTHERS

- I realized that the ED wasn't just affecting me, but those around me. I wanted to get better for my family and friends.
- Friends and family told me they wanted to see me well again.

EMPOWERMENT AND UNDERSTANDING

- I gained an understanding of the issues and experiences that had led to the ED.
- I recognized my ability to take steps towards recovery.
- Even though I wasn't fully responsible for the ED, I realized that only I had the power to help myself.
- I found a passion for something other than losing weight.

"I've realized how many great opportunities life has to offer me, and I will not let food or my weight ruin them for me. There are more important things in life than stressing about your next meal."

"I thought of my goals. I wanted to go to college. If I continued being 'sick' I would never have been able to make it to college. I had always been the person who had their life already planned out for them. When I realized I was the one stopping myself from reaching ANY of those goals, I knew I had to do something even if it was hard. Then I made a list of my goals, even really small ones. So I could remind myself of what I was fighting for."

"I'm not always ready for recovery. I go up and down. During better times, I remind myself that I don't want to die. I don't want to be remembered for being thin. Life is so much more than a number, and I'm worth more than that. It's been a long, hard haul for me that has spanned way too many years. I want to be able to help others. I want to live free. I want to eat what I like and when I like it. I want to run free. I don't want my hips to disintegrate and leave me in a wheelchair or unable to care for myself. I have things to do and I'm not getting them done because of this, and that is frustrating."

"I wanted recovery. I wanted to be healthy and happy. Until you recognize what you truly want, it's hard to recover. But know that the time will come."

2. What can I do when I'm having a difficult day?

STICK WITH IT

- Focus on progress, not perfection.
- Don't give up, get help.
- As hard as it may be to stay positive, healthy and strong, keep fighting because you deserve to get better.
- Know that things do get better. Learn what your passions are, other than body image. Imagine yourself living just doing those things.
- Allow yourself to feel the fear and do it anyway.
- Remember that tomorrow is another day to try again, so don't give up if you tripped up today.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

- Remind yourself that you are beautiful, amazing and wonderful.
- Don't be afraid to be ugly. Once you get over the fear of being unattractive and stop equating beauty with other good things in life (friends, love, happiness), it's a lot easier to love yourself unconditionally.
- Know that things are beautiful if you love them.
- Remember that you are in charge of how you feel, and today you choose happiness and health.
- Believe in yourself. You are unique, and you have something to contribute.
- Remind yourself that you are beautiful when you smile.



"Recovery is worth the fight. Recovery is possible. Recovery will be hard to begin with but it will get easier and it is so worth sticking at it. Think about all you want to achieve, that won't happen being eating disordered. There is a way out. And you do deserve to be recovered."

"Recovery takes time, patience, enormous effort, and strength. We all have those things. It's a matter of choosing to use them to save our own lives – to survive – but beyond that, to thrive. If you are still teetering on the brink of illness, I invite you to step firmly onto the solid ground of health. Walk back toward the world. Gather strength as you go. Listen to your own inner voice, not the voice of the eating disorder – as you recover, your voice will get clearer and louder, and eventually the voice of the eating disorder will recede. Give it time. Don't give up. Love yourself absolutely. Take back your life."

2. What can I do when I'm having a difficult day? *(continued)*

"One of the best things I learned is that by acknowledging a difficult day, I give myself the space and permission to be okay with the fact that some days are harder than others. Self-care is absolutely necessary, and sometimes that takes a little work, since often difficult days are managed with eating disorder behaviours. Having a toolbox to go to for those days (could include a stuffed animal, photographs, cards, favourite fragrances, etc.) is important. Preparing for the difficult days is half the battle!"

"There are going to be bad days; there will be bumps in the road. NO ONE reaches recovery without falling down every once in a while. Just remember that every time you get back up and choose to fight for yourself, YOU get stronger and the eating disorder gets weaker. If you don't give up, you will get there. Believe in yourself."



3. General inspirational messages:

"Remember tough times pass, and you will get through this. When I am in a really good headspace, I will sometimes write letters to myself and hide them for days when I am struggling so I can read them and trust them because they are coming from me personally and my heart."

"Breathe. Embrace the new moment and know that this too shall pass."

"Just get through today. Don't worry about yesterday or tomorrow, they don't count."

"Remind yourself that one bad day does not have to turn into a bad week. It is one day, and every minute of every day is a chance to start over. Accept your slips as just that, and move forward – you cannot change what has already happened, but you can learn from it and focus on the positive – the rest of your life can start right now!"

"Focus on the positives. When I was struggling, I thought everything was bad, but when you stop to realize it, there are truly so many things to be grateful for. Focus on the good things and count your blessings every day. It will change your mood."

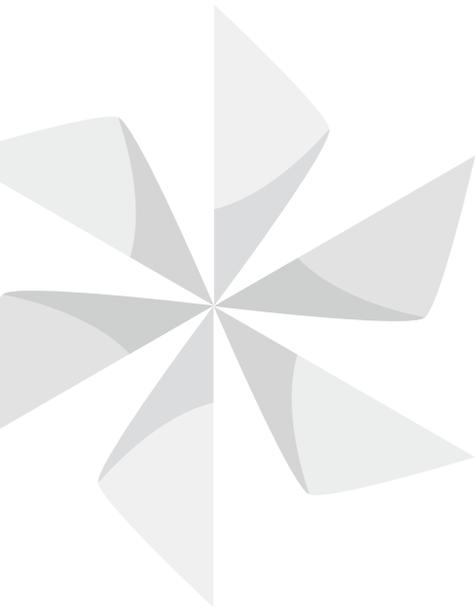
"IT DOES GET BETTER! One day you are going to wake up and be glad you did, one day you will see how pretty your eyes are before how wide your hips are. It does happen, and you MUST keep pushing through for it, you must. It will be the hardest thing you've ever done, but it will also be the most wonderful."

"I like positive affirmations. I tend to write a new one each week on a little note card and decorate it and stick it on my wall. For that week, that's the thought I want to bear in mind. If something gets hard, it's important to remember what you want in life. In my darkest days, it was hard to focus on the bigger picture and the future, but trying to just focus on short term goals can help that."



Conclusion

This Guide offers a unique and hopeful perspective on eating disorder recovery. It contains words of struggle and pain, but also of success and joy. Words can't ever tell it all - you need to live it to feel it. Recovery is possible, even if it takes time and is marked by periods of relapse. Whether you have an abundance of support, or little of it, we hope this Guide made you feel less alone and gave you encouragement, understanding, and inspiration. Recovery from an eating disorder does not guarantee a perfect life. Life will never be perfect, and there are going to be difficult times; but it can be wonderful. Use the support you have, and always, always dare to believe. Never would we have touched the stars if we had not first dreamed it to be possible. Start with a dream, then make it your story.



The Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre offers information and resources on a wide range of mental health and substance use issues affecting children and youth in British Columbia. These include, but are not limited to; depression, anxiety, attention deficit and behavioural problems, child/youth eating disorders and substance use. We also provide resources for adults with eating disorders.

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