

## What happens at AEA meetings?

An Addictive Eaters Anonymous (AEA) meeting is where AEA members meet on a regular basis to share their experience, strength and hope with each other, that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from addictive eating. An AEA meeting may take many different forms. Generally, you will find addictive eaters talking about their powerlessness over food and other substances and the unmanageability of their lives, what actions they have taken to help them find freedom from this, and how they are living their lives today. There is an emphasis on the solution, rather than the problem, with members focusing on carrying the message of sobriety to the addictive eater who still suffers, as this is the primary purpose of an AEA meeting.

## Can I join AEA if I do not live near a meeting venue?

Yes. AEA hosts regular online meetings, which enable members to carry the message to one another around the world. This is particularly helpful to people who live in areas where there are no other AEA members. We also have an extensive network of members willing to share their experience, strength and hope with you on the phone. Many AEA members find attendance at open or closed meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, whichever is appropriate, to be helpful to their recovery.

To find out more about AEA please visit:  
[www.addictiveeatersanonymous.org](http://www.addictiveeatersanonymous.org)



**Addictive Eaters Anonymous** is a Twelve Step fellowship based on the model pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous. Through working the AEA Twelve Step Programme, members have found several decades of recovery from binge eating, anorexia, bulimia, other forms of addictive eating and compulsive exercise.

### Contact Details

For more information, meeting details and to find out how to speak to an AEA member, visit: [www.addictiveeatersanonymous.org](http://www.addictiveeatersanonymous.org) or email [contact@aeainfo.org](mailto:contact@aeainfo.org)



# Addictive Eaters Anonymous

*To The Newcomer*

## Welcome!

Many of us felt nervous when attending our first meeting, when picking up the phone to make that first call to an AEA member, or when writing that initial contact email to AEA. We've all been there. We found there was no need to worry. We were welcomed by people who understood our problem, who did not judge us, and who offered a solution in the Twelve Steps of Addictive Eaters Anonymous. We were welcomed by people who had been through the same experience we were going through now.

## Where do I begin?

A great place to start is by listening to, or reading, the members' stories section on the AEA Website, which can be found at: [www.addictiveeatersanonymous.org](http://www.addictiveeatersanonymous.org) Listen for the similarities. Try and identify where you can. Keep an open mind.

Newcomers sometimes struggle to understand how AEA works. There are no rules and no one appears to be in charge. No one seems to tell anyone else what to do. This is because AEA members simply share what has worked for them. Members have found from their own experience that change must come from within and cannot be forced upon another person. At the heart of the AEA programme is the spiritual concept of surrender. Most sober members will wait until they are asked for help. This means that you take the initiative to start working the programme, when you feel ready.



## What is Sobriety in AEA?

Members of AEA achieve sobriety by sharing their experience, strength and hope with each other and living the Twelve Step programme of recovery as a way of life. Sobriety in AEA is freedom from addictive eating and all mind-altering substances. As a result of sobriety, AEA members have found recovery from binge eating, anorexia, bulimia, other forms of addictive eating and compulsive exercise. Through sobriety, members find peace of mind and the ability to live a meaningful and productive life.

## Why do I need to give up mind-altering substances as well as food?

Many of us who come to AEA are using mind-altering substances, including alcohol, drugs, prescribed\* or over the counter medication. It did not occur to us that our use of other substances may be a manifestation of the disease of addiction. We had not considered that we might be addicted to substances other than food. Others of us found that even though we might not be using a substance addictively, we have often used substances to change the way we feel.

This may seem surprising to newcomers who believe they only have a problem with food. Over time we have come to realise that food is a symptom of a wider problem, the disease of addiction. We have found that addiction can switch from one substance to another, and that addressing all aspects of addiction is essential in finding freedom from addictive eating.

\*Any cessation of prescribed medication must be undertaken under the care of an informed physician.

## Is AEA religious?

No. AEA is not a religious organisation, nor is it affiliated to one. AEA has members of different faiths or with no faith at all. We have found, however, that we need a Power greater than ourselves to become sober, as we had repeatedly failed to achieve this on our own unaided will. How individual members choose to define their Higher Power is entirely up to them. For some it is their AEA group, for others it is the Spirit of the Universe, for some the collective human consciousness, and for others a more traditional religious God.

## How much does it cost to join AEA?

There are no dues or fees for joining AEA or attending AEA meetings. We are self-supporting through our own voluntary contributions. At some point during each meeting we pass the basket to help cover expenses, such as the cost of rent and literature. Members are not obliged to contribute, but we usually do so to the extent we are able.

## I'm anorexic/bulimic, will AEA work for me?

Yes. AEA has members who have recovered from anorexia, bulimia and binge eating. Many have been underweight, overweight or obese; others were people of average weight yet suffered with an obsession with food. Members may have used exercise and other substances to try and control their weight. Before coming to AEA, members found that they were powerless over food, and unable to stop the food obsession, whatever its manifestations.