

## A Brief History of Addictive Eaters Anonymous

AEA includes members who have been sober for decades through practising the principles outlined in AEA's Twelve Steps. Newcomers may ask how someone can be sober for decades when the AEA fellowship was only established in 2017.

In truth, AEA's programme of recovery began long before AEA existed as a fellowship. The AEA story began in 1980 when two individuals, who would later help found AEA, joined a food recovery fellowship in New Zealand. Over time, these and other members found that addiction can switch from one substance to another, and that in order to get well they needed to be free of all mind-altering substances. They came to realise that food is a symptom of a wider problem, the disease of addiction.

As their concept of what constituted sobriety developed, it became apparent that the members now in AEA needed to go in a different direction. They formed a new fellowship, based around freedom from addictive eating and all mind-altering substances. Today's AEA groups remain committed to this same strong message, first carried by the early members.

The first Addictive Eaters Anonymous meeting was held in Christchurch, New Zealand in April 2017. AEA is now thriving in other parts of the world. A General Service Committee, which supports the structure of the worldwide fellowship, was established in February 2018.



**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

*What is AEA?*

## Overview

Addictive Eaters Anonymous (AEA) is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from addictive eating.

AEA has members who have suffered 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.

AEA is not a diet or weight loss organisation. AEA members follow a Twelve Step programme, based on that of Alcoholics Anonymous. Through working the Steps, members find a Higher Power and freedom from the obsession with food. Members share their experience with newcomers of how they have found sobriety.

*Addictive eating* and *eating addictively* are terms used in Addictive Eaters Anonymous to describe obsessive or compulsive food behaviour, including, but not limited to, overeating, binge eating, undereating, starving, purging, compulsive exercise, the use of drugs to control weight, obsessive thoughts about food and obsession with body image or weight control.

AEA is not affiliated with any other organisation. AEA meetings are open to anyone. There is no cost to attend.

## How AEA Works

### **Meetings**

Meetings offer newcomers the opportunity to get to know other AEA members and see that there is a solution to the food obsession. Even if you are still bingeing, purging or eating addictively in other ways, you are welcome. The only requirement for AEA membership is a desire to stop addictive eating, you do not have to be symptom-free to attend AEA meetings.

### **Sponsorship**

A sponsor is a sober member of AEA who shares their experience, strength, and hope with a sponsee that they may achieve sobriety. To find a sponsor, newcomers are encouraged to look for someone whose recovery they are attracted to, and ask how he or she is achieving this.

### **The Twelve Steps**

The aim of working the steps is for AEA members to have a spiritual awakening, freeing them from addictive eating and the obsession with food. Working the steps is best done with the guidance of a sponsor.

### **Regular contact with sober AEA members**

By listening to sober members share how they overcome their problems by living the programme as a way of life, newcomers learn how to do the same. AEA members know that the only way they can maintain their own sobriety is by taking the time to carry the message of recovery to others.



## Who can join AEA?

Anyone with a desire to stop addictive eating can become an AEA member. Everyone is welcome in AEA, including family or friends of anyone who suffers from anorexia, bulimia, obesity or other forms of addictive eating. AEA also welcomes healthcare professionals and members of other Twelve Step recovery fellowships.

## What do you mean by *Sobriety*?

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.

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.

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.