

## The Twelve Steps of Addictive Eaters Anonymous

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

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**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

*Surrender in AEA*

## **Surrender: The heart of the AEA programme**

At the heart of the AEA programme is the spiritual concept of surrender. For many AEA members, surrender is the most challenging part of the recovery process. It is also the most important, as it is the key to sobriety and working the Twelve Step programme of recovery. Without surrender, we found it impossible to take direction and let go of our old way of life, despite the fact that our old ideas continually took us back into the food. We found the concept of surrender, of admitting defeat, abhorrent. We mistakenly thought that the food obsession had to be fought and conquered, even though we had lost every battle we ever fought.

### **Accepting our powerlessness over food**

When we were first faced with the idea of surrender, many of us rebelled. We were confusing humiliation with humility. Each and every time we did battle with the food, with each new diet, exercise regime, or firm resolution to resist, we ended up eating addictively again, totally humiliated, more disillusioned than ever. Soon, the old resolve to win would surface again, but however our next effort to control food manifested, we were beaten. Not just once, but again, and again, and again. The great paradox of the AEA programme is that we find no strength until we admit complete defeat. And the deeper the surrender, the more powerful the strength.



## **Becoming teachable**

It was only when we finally admitted that we were broken, that our constant attempts to eat like other people had failed and our lives were unmanageable, that we first got a glimpse of humility and the hope that life could get better. We needed humility if we were going to get well, because we had to become teachable. We were going to have to take on board some fairly radical ideas, and make some quite drastic changes to the way we were living our lives. We had to face the fact that the way we were living just wasn't working. Despite our lives being miserable and chaotic, this was a difficult chunk of truth to digest. Many of us wanted to defend our misery and hang on to our old ideas. Pain, however, is the greatest of all teachers when it comes to surrender. We found that when the pain became too much, when nothing worked anymore, when our excuses and rationalisations sounded hollow, even to our own ears, we finally began to listen to the suggestions that were being made to us by sober members.

### **A change of attitude**

Our attitude changed. We were prepared to do absolutely anything to get well. This, in essence, defines surrender in AEA: the willingness to go to any lengths. It has been said that AEA is for the desperate, for it was only by reaching a point of utter desperation that we became willing to let go of our old way of thinking. We turned to our sponsors and other sober members for direction. They talked of the need for a Higher Power, for spiritual discipline, and for prioritising sobriety above all other things. Though we were in the emotional turmoil of early sobriety, we began to see the experiential wisdom in their words.

## **Finding a Higher Power**

Self-reliance had failed us. We had to have a power greater than ourselves if we were to get well. We found that power through following the direction of our sponsors and other sober members, and through working the Twelve Step programme of Addictive Eaters Anonymous with their support and guidance. Occasionally the old thinking would return, and we would rebel once more, convinced we could succeed alone, convinced that there must be an easier, softer way. More often than not, our old friend pain would return and suggest otherwise, and we would find ourselves back on the programme, with a little more humility, and a deeper understanding of our spectacular capacity for self-deception.

### **A lifelong journey**

Many AEA longtimers find that as their sobriety continues, so does their understanding of surrender. We find that the highs and lows of life on life's terms, whether they be in our family life, relationships or careers, can often be challenging. When things get tough, our first thought can still be rooted in self-centred fear, and we want to take control of the situation. Our own experience, and the wise, sober counsel of others tells us differently. We know that when we are running the show, the unmanageability is bound to return. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, we begin to see the light. As we surrender our desire to control the person, place or situation that is causing us pain, to the God of our own understanding, we discover that our faith deepens. As our perspective of surrender broadens, we begin to see every difficulty as an opportunity for spiritual growth.