



These are questions that may help your patients identify if they have a problem with food:

- Do you eat when you are not hungry?
- Do you find when you start eating you cannot stop?
- Do you constantly think about food?
- Are you always on diets but unable to stick to them?
- Do you binge, eat in secret, or keep secrets about what you have eaten?
- Are you embarrassed or ashamed about your weight or the way you eat?
- Have you ever felt your life would be better if you were thinner or able to control your eating?
- Do you envy people who are thin or appear to eat 'normally'?
- Do you use other substances in addition to food to change the way you feel?
- Are your family or friends concerned about the way you eat?
- Has your eating caused trouble at home, at work, or in your relationships?
- Do you use, or have you used, laxatives, diet pills, exercise, starvation or vomiting to try and control your weight?
- Is your eating adversely affecting your health?
- Have you had or are you considering weight loss surgery?
- Does the way you eat cause you physical or emotional pain?

If your patient answers 'yes' to more than one of these questions, they may have a problem with food.



Contact Details:

For more information, meeting details and to find out how to speak to an AEA member, you can visit:
www.addictiveeatersanonymous.org
or email **contact@aeainfo.org**



Addictive Eaters Anonymous

Information for the Healthcare Professional

A Brief Overview

Addictive Eaters Anonymous is a Twelve Step fellowship based on 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. AEA is not a diet or weight loss organisation. Members share their experience with newcomers of how they have found sobriety. Sobriety in AEA is freedom from addictive eating and all mind-altering substances.

AEA Meetings

AEA meetings are open to anyone and there is no cost to attend. At AEA meetings, members share how the programme has worked for them and the difference it is making in their lives. Meetings offer newcomers the opportunity to get to know other AEA members, and see that there is a solution to the obsession with food. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive eating.

Everyone is welcome in AEA, including family or friends of anyone who suffers from addictive eating. AEA also welcomes healthcare professionals and members of other Twelve Step recovery fellowships. Newcomers from around the world are encouraged to attend a regular online AEA Web Event.

Inside AEA: A Clinician's View



The following is the experience of a clinician who has been practising the AEA way of life for over ten years.

Over ten years ago, at the age of thirty, I realised that, despite my education as a doctor and apparent willpower in other areas of my life, with regard to food I was beaten. Always intending to have just 'one or two', I would find myself addictively eating large volumes of food on a regular basis. I couldn't follow the sensible recommendations I would have given patients. I felt baffled and ashamed about my secret life.

At that time I saw a notice for a Twelve Step fellowship that dealt with food. I made a phone call to the contact person. I was very tense going to my first meeting. I was admitting that I had a problem that I couldn't manage myself. I was afraid I would meet someone who recognised me from where I worked at that time. At the meeting I was welcomed by a group of people, many of whom had found recovery. I was wary at the mention of a "Higher Power"; Was AEA some sort of a cult? I soon found that it wasn't - I was free to come and go as I wished. There were no fees to join. This didn't suit me. I would have preferred to be able to buy recovery. There was talk about the disease of addiction. This too caused me to balk. To my medical mind it sounded like I was abdicating responsibility for my behaviour. However,

when I reflected on my experience, I could see that my obsession to control my food and weight, my complete failure to do so and the progression of my symptoms, fitted the disease description. I learned that addiction does not discriminate and that education does not provide the necessary defense against 'picking up the first one'.

By having the experience of recovery through The Twelve Steps of Addictive Eaters Anonymous, I have found freedom from the obsession with food and weight. I see The Twelve Steps as essentially spiritual in nature, which, when worked, bring about spiritual, mental and physical recovery.

Today when I meet patients who are struggling with addictive eating, I suggest that one option is that they go to Addictive Eaters Anonymous. There is a power and understanding in one addictive eater in recovery sharing the solution with another who has the problem.

While addicts, like me, have no willpower over food, we often are given the grace of willingness to work through The Twelve Steps. AEA has given freedom from addiction, hope and joy to many people who were once hopeless. From my own personal experience and witnessing the recovery of other addictive eaters, there is no doubt in my mind that Addictive Eaters Anonymous provides a solution to the problem of addictive eating.