

Anorexics and Bulimics Anonymous For the Compulsive Eater

(Content from pamphlet P-02)

What is Anorexics and Bulimics Anonymous?

ABA is a 12-Step Fellowship that originated in 1993 among a group of people who identified themselves as anorexics and bulimics, and who had been unable to find elsewhere all that they needed for recovery from their eating disorder.

As they worked together at supporting one another, they discovered the solution for their disease: the foundational concept of “sobriety” that is still used in ABA today, followed by the vigorous action of the 12-Step Program.

These two elements, practiced together, result in full physical, emotional, and spiritual healing from the deadly addictions of anorexia and bulimia.

Our third tradition states that “the only requirement for ABA membership is a desire to stop unhealthy eating practices.”

The key to recovery in all 12-Step Fellowships is the crucial element of *identification*: the discovery that we share the same problem as others in the room, have felt the same feelings others describe, and think the same thoughts they do.

A New Understanding of Eating Disorders

ABA’s basic textbook explains the theory that all three eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, and compulsive eating disorder) together constitute a single entity — like a coin — with anorexia on one side, compulsive eating disorder on the other side, and bulimia sandwiched down the middle.

This theory, derived from the personal experience of ABA members, has proven helpful in allowing people with a wide range of eating-disorder experience to come to ABA and recover.

If people can identify with the problem, then they will come to hope that the solution offered can work for them too.

Furthermore, in ABA we all learn that the “drug” of our eating disorder addiction is not food, but rather the inner *feeling of being in control* of food or of our body weight or shape. This is true even for people who came to us believing they were *out* of control of their eating behavior.

What happens to my weight in ABA?

Sobriety in ABA means surrender of all control of our food, exercise, weight, and body shape to a Higher Power of our own understanding. In early recovery, this process involves receiving “meal support” from other people. When we do this, our weight slowly moves in the direction our Higher Power intends it to be. For some this means weight gain, for others it means weight loss, and for some it means our weight remains the same.

Weight change is a by-product of recovery — it is NOT the focus of ABA.

Compulsive Eaters in ABA

Many people who identify themselves as compulsive eaters, also known as “compulsive overeaters” or “binge eaters,” are surprised to discover that they identify with what they hear in the rooms of ABA. Some of them remain with us, become sober in their eating practices, follow our 12-Step Program, and are restored to healthy thinking by their Higher Power.

But I’m Fat! How could I come to ABA?

Very few newcomers suffering from an eating disorder, regardless of their current weight, think they are thin enough to walk into a meeting for people with anorexia and bulimia. *But when they do come, they discover that their disease is not about weight, or even about eating, but rather about an obsession with food and body weight — a preoccupation that interferes with their capacity to fully live their lives.*

All people can be fully healed of this obsession — if they are willing to get sober and do the 12-Step Program of ABA.

Can all Compulsive Eaters get well in ABA?

Many compulsive eaters have found recovery in ABA. All are welcome to come and discover for themselves whether or not they identify with us.

If you are a compulsive eater, here are some questions to help you know if ABA is for you:

1. Have you ever gone on a “diet” to gain control of your eating and your weight?
2. Have you ever tried an exercise program to control your weight or your shape?
3. Have you ever felt good about yourself because you were losing weight or getting more fit?
4. Have you ever skipped meals in an attempt to lose weight?
5. After bingeing on food, do you feel guilty or tell yourself that you lack willpower?
6. Have you ever tried to get rid of food you have eaten, either by inducing vomiting, taking laxatives, fasting, or exercising?
7. Are you preoccupied with thoughts about your body size or shape?
8. Do you think a great deal about how you might control your weight or shape?
9. Have you ever envied anorexics, or wished you were one of them?
10. Are you preoccupied with thoughts about food and eating?

If you answer “yes” to one or more of these questions, then ABA may be the place where you can find recovery. Check our website for contact information.