



eating disorders *anonymous*

# EDA Step Workbook



A guide for new members and  
Eating Disorders Anonymous groups

**Step Nine –  
Made direct amends to such people wherever  
possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**

You have arrived at last at Step Nine! Willingness and courage have landed you at the brink of a life changing undertaking. Our first steps toward recovery and freedom required that we acknowledge the severity of our problem and realize that by reaching out to a Higher Power, we could find help. Our next steps led us to seek that help and begin to look at how we had created suffering in our own lives and the lives of others. Now we are about to take a step which for many is the most fearsome of all--making direct amends to those who have been harmed by our behavior. Most of us do not want to admit our culpability to even a single person, let alone many! Step Nine is a daunting endeavor to be sure, yet each amend we make or even attempt is a very serious, committed and transparent step toward building healthy relationships with ourselves, with others and with our Higher Power. We need to keep reminding ourselves that these amends are our passage to true freedom and happiness.

Step Nine calls for us to open our hearts to our Higher Power for guidance and direction. Consulting with a sponsor or mentor will also help a great deal. It is often difficult to determine where, when and to whom an amend should be made.

In making amends we must understand that we intend to repair harm. We do not need to be sorry for painful feelings we might have had about people. We do not need to regret assertive but respectful behavior that others might not have liked. We do not make amends for issues that we know for certain have been mutually resolved. We focus on our actions that we know have created painful consequences.

In making an amend, we meet the recipient face to face if possible. We make an appointment, and we keep it. We start off with an apology and then determine if we have agreement from the other person to proceed. We speak as simply as possible, making our point with specific details but as few words as necessary.

Expressing remorse is the first step in our process of transforming our relationships, but it is never enough. What is called for is a change of heart. We must be clear about what we have done and what we will do differently. In many cases restitution is required. When restitution is called for, we need to give back what was taken away, as promptly and completely as possible. We ask help and guidance from our Higher Power in addressing issues that could inhibit restitution.

In each case, we listen respectfully to the recipient of our amend. We guard against the all-too-human tendency to defend and justify our actions. We are vigilant against approval-seeking behaviors and attitudes. Approval must come from ourselves knowing that we are doing the right thing.

As we make amends, we need to be clear that we move forward consistently regardless of how others might react. We stay committed by doing what it takes to stay balanced. Our peace and freedom is tied to achieving and maintaining a balance of safe, nurturing activities and bold, courageous acts.

Our efforts in making amends must be whole-hearted and unreserved. If there is something we can do to make things better, we resolve to do it and then we deliver to the fullest extent possible (and faster than expected).

If someone asks us to perform something that we are not able to undertake, for instance if the person to whom we are making amends wants us to fix the relationship they have with someone else, we obviously cannot deliver on such a request directly. We are humble and contrite. We do not argue. We might say something to the effect that we will do whatever is in our power to help the situation. Later, we do not laugh at the seeming absurdity of such a request; instead we do our best to think of ways that we might actually help the requestor with their problem. We should not meddle with the relationships of others but in such a case where we have been asked to intercede, we can pray for our Higher Power for guidance and we can pray that things be resolved in the best way possible. We might be able to use active listening to help the requestor work their way through the situation. Perhaps we are being offered an opportunity to develop a new or stronger relationship with the person identified by the requestor. We must not shy away from any work unless there is clear and imminent danger of injury to one or more people in the situation. Remember, there is clear and imminent danger in our disease. We must move forward, or we fall back. Do the necessary!

In most cases, a sincere attempt to make an amend will be met warmly and with full support. The people to whom you are able to make direct amends will become your trusted companions in this walk of life we have the privilege to enjoy.

In some cases, an amend will be met with something less than warmth and something less than full support. Most of us feel deep, aching sorrow when this happens. These people have been seriously hurt and are keeping boundaries to protect themselves from further injury. We do the best we can with these people, but we do not push them to lower the boundaries. We respect the boundaries as best we are able and we commit to behave in a trustworthy and responsible manner at all times.

Sometimes, an attempt to make an amend will be met with derision or worse. We may lose all desire to make an amend when faced with a rude, demeaning or dismissive response. We try to remember we are not responsible for the actions of others, even if those others are our parents or children. If others are malicious the situation is certainly sad but all is not lost. Clearly, there is a great deal of emotion involved when people are bluntly critical or unable to hear us out. We remind ourselves that we have injured these people and probably quite severely. Such people are behaving rationally for those who have been deeply hurt. We stay calm. We do not become agitated. We do not protest on our own behalf. We will probably feel a deep need to turn the tables back on the recipient of our amend, but such action, no matter how richly deserved, will never do. We are there because we want to move things forward, not backward. Some of us have found it helpful to say something along the lines of "I am truly sorry for

the offense. I did not mean to disturb you and hope that you can be patient with me. I am very much a work in progress and have much to learn. Perhaps we can talk about this some other time. I must go now." If we have such an encounter, we have much to work with! We first earnestly thank our Higher Power for trusting us to handle such a difficult situation and for allowing us to see such raw responses. We remember that others to whom we need to make amends may feel similarly to our angry amend recipient, though they may do a better job of managing their responses. We allow things to cool down. We are sure to be upset by such an encounter. We earnestly did the best we could and we must be satisfied with that.

There is no need to reinitiate a conversation with anyone who is unwilling or unable to hear us out. Chances are, the person in question is someone important to us. If we see such a person regularly, it is appropriate to behave as if the person in question was gracious. We are warm and reasonably solicitous but we maintain a respectful distance. We remember we still have an outstanding amend. We continue to pray for the person's health, happiness and success. In time, we may find the relationship restores itself through nothing more than our own tolerance and forgiveness.

There are situations where making amends is likely to re-stimulate old wounds or create new ones. For instance, it is very risky to be making amends to the spouses of people we may have illicitly been romantic with. It is also probably harmful to disclose such liaisons to our own romantic partner or spouse. It is here that we need to do the amends inside our own hearts and minds. Prayer is a powerful tool in this situation. In situations where we are unsure, an honest discussion with our sponsor, pastor, or therapist is in order. Transgressions involving the law should also be a subject treated with great care and discussed with our sponsor, pastor, or therapist. Role playing with safe people might be helpful, as well as perhaps writing down the amends and the imagined restitutions on paper. Here as always, a change of heart is necessary. We need to ponder thoroughly the pain created by the choices we made in the past, and identify healthier strategies to meet our needs in the future.

We are bound to make mistakes again, but with reflection and planning we will make fewer, and those we do make will be quickly addressed through Step Ten. We never need to hide in shame and secrecy when we make mistakes. We have earned our freedom through responsibility, accountability, openness and restorative action.