

Life During Recovery: Questions to Ask Yourself



National Eating Disorders Association

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What's life supposed to be like without the eating disorder? This is a question you'll need to consider if you are in recovery. Ask yourself: "If I woke up tomorrow morning and my eating disorder had magically disappeared, what would my life look like? What would be different? How would I know it's different?" Knowing how your life will be different gives you a clue as to what you want from recovery. How you answer is a very personal decision.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to help you have a clearer vision of what you want and need for staying in recovery:

Let Go of the Comfort Zone

Ask yourself: How can I keep going even when I feel uncomfortable?

Expect the recovery process to be uncomfortable. You have to live through the painful emotions and uncomfortable physical changes to reach your healing destination. For instance, take the objective of normalizing your behaviors with food. At first when you are asked to follow a structured food plan, it can feel overwhelming to think you have to eat three meals a day, plus snacks. With time and consistency, your body physically and emotionally adjusts to a normal eating pattern. And eventually, you'll be comfortable.

Lean on Support

Ask yourself: How can I allow others to support me?

Recovery is a time to let support in, not push it away. However, many people find it difficult to reach out and accept support from others. The truth is it's much easier to walk the road of recovery with someone walking alongside you than making the trip on your own. If you are having difficulty accepting support, think about how you feel when you are given the opportunity to provide support to others. Remember, it is a gift.

Set Small, Achievable Goals

Ask yourself: What is one mini-goal I can set today?

No one says you have to recover overnight. Most people don't wake up one day free of the disorder when they've been struggling for months or even years. There are many mini-goals that need to be realized first before you can reach the ultimate goal. Your goal may be to eat out at a restaurant with friends without anxiety or guilt. To reach that goal, you may first have to practice eating meals with your family at home. Once you've successfully accomplished this goal, you can expand your repertoire to eating a meal with your family at a restaurant, and then move to eating a meal out with your friends. Keep in mind that your success in reaching your goals is often achieved when you break it up into smaller, more manageable pieces.

Make Peace with Normalcy

Ask yourself: How will life be better when I am "normal?"

While it may feel anxiety provoking, let yourself make peace with normality: normal eating, normal body size, normal weight range, normal coping. I fought for many years from being "normal" at many levels. My behaviors when I was sick were very abnormal, but for some reason they felt safe. I was afraid of my identity being "normal." Recovery is a journey to normalcy and healing. This is not to say you can't be unique in your own right, but recovery from an eating disorder takes you to a place of normal functioning—and that's a healthy, productive, life-enhancing place to be. Don't fight it, embrace it.

Find Uniqueness the Healthy Way

Ask yourself: What qualities make me a unique and special person?

Having an eating disorder sometimes becomes someone's identity. You may feel unique and special, and fear losing this identity—even if it's destroying lives along the way. Your task in recovery is to find your identity apart from the eating disorder. That person will be far stronger and more unique than any identity you could assume while being sick. Allow the passion of who you are meant to be bring you closer to your new, healthy identity, one living without the eating disorder.