

# Tips FOR RECOVERY

Recovery from an eating disorder is a deeply personal journey and unique to each person. For many people recovery is an ongoing process. These people don't yet feel 'fully recovered' from an eating disorder, but most find that they can regain a satisfying, hopeful, fulfilling life while still 'recovering'. And many others do fully recover. Just as the journey is individual and unique, so is the concept of 'full recovery'. Only you will know when you are fully recovered.

Whatever recovery means for you and wherever you are on the journey, here are some tips to help you as you move forward.

## **Try not to feel ashamed.**

There is no need to feel shame; this illness is not your fault so try not to blame yourself.

## **Be honest, be brave.**

For many, the first step in recovery is admitting that something is wrong and that you need help. It can be confusing, scary and difficult to accept that something isn't right, but the bravest thing you can do is acknowledge the problem and confide in someone you trust. If you don't know who to turn to, you can call the Butterfly Support Line and speak to one of our qualified, compassionate counsellors. The earlier you seek help, the easier your recovery will be.

## **Reach out for support.**

Support is one of the most powerful ingredients in recovery. No matter who you are, you do not need to face your eating disorder alone. If you can, ask a close friend, family member, school counsellor or health professional for support. If your friends and family cannot support you then there are several free helplines you can call to talk to someone in a supporting role (details below).

## **Be open about your feelings.**

Your emotions are important and valuable. It is not uncommon to feel guilt, shame, anger, fear, exhaustion and grief all in one day. It can be painful, but it is important to let yourself 'feel your feelings', and not swallow them down. By being open about your feelings with supportive people, you can gradually find self-acceptance, validation and hope.

## **Relapse does not mean failure: keep on trying**

Recovery can be a slippery slope; you may take a few steps forward and then slide a few steps back. You may be travelling quite well for a while, and then suddenly hit a stressful time in your life. Eating disorder thoughts can re-emerge at these times and it is common for relapse to occur. If this happens it does not mean that you have failed. Relapse is a normal part of recovery and you can get back on track. Remember that you have done it before and you can do it again. Reach out to someone safe and ask them to help you through this time.

## **Get to know your triggers: plan ahead.**

It can be helpful to make a list of things or circumstances that can trigger your eating disorder behaviours (for example, stress around exams and family celebrations such as Christmas time). This can help you prepare if the situation arises. It won't be possible to avoid all your triggers, so make a plan for how you can access support if you do feel triggered. You could ask someone you trust to help you around triggers so you can feel more confident of staying on track during these times.

## **Have patience: recovery takes time.**

No one can tell you how long it will take you to recover – this is highly individual. However, recovery can take longer than you may think and you will probably encounter setbacks along the way. Sometimes it may feel as if you will never be free of the negative thoughts and behaviours. It is normal to feel this way, so try not to get disheartened, and don't give up. If you are stuck and feel defeated or like you are not progressing, look back and try to see how far you have come already. It can also help to talk to your health professional or call the Support Line to explore why you are feeling this way and get some fresh ideas on things to try.

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## **Reconnect with your healthy self.**

Your eating disorder may seem very strong at times but somewhere inside you there is still a 'healthy self' that wants to get better. Try as often as you can to find that part of you. It may help you to picture what you would say to another person, a child or a friend, who is in your situation; then to try and say those same things to yourself. Use your healthy self to challenge and fight the eating disorder thoughts and behaviours. A professional can help you to do this if you are finding it difficult.

## **Be kind to yourself.**

Eating disorders require time, willingness and dedication to overcome. Recovery can be challenging, so it's really important to take time out for rest and relaxation. Doing something kind for yourself is an important part of recovery. What would you love to do right now? Make a list of things you have enjoyed in the past but are not doing now, and another list of things you would really like to do but have never done before. Choose one or more of these things and do it as a self-care activity

## **Remember you are not alone.**

Butterfly is here to support you through your recovery. Call our Support Line on **1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673)** or email us at **[support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au](mailto:support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au)**