

THE **LIFE**
RECOVERY[®]

— WORKBOOK FOR —

Eating Disorders

A Bible-Centered
Approach for Taking
Your Life Back

**STEPHEN ARTERBURN
& DAVID STOOP**

THE **LIFE**
RECOVERY[®]

— WORKBOOK FOR —

Eating Disorders

A Bible-Centered
Approach for Taking
Your Life Back

STEPHEN ARTERBURN
& DAVID STOOP



Tyndale House Publishers
Carol Stream, Illinois

Visit Tyndale online at www.liferecoverybible.com and www.tyndale.com.

TYNDALE, Tyndale's quill logo, and *Life Recovery* are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers.

The Big Book is a registered trademark of A.A. World Services, Inc.

The Life Recovery Workbook for Eating Disorders: A Bible-Centered Approach for Taking Your Life Back

Copyright © 2020 by Stephen Arterburn and David Stoop. All rights reserved.

Cover illustration of aquamarine background © maystra/Depositphotos.com. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Dan Farrell

Edited by Ellen Richard Vosburg

The author is represented by the literary agency of Alive Literary Agency, 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80920, www.aliveliterary.com.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

Scripture quotations marked TLB are taken from *The Living Bible*, copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from *THE MESSAGE*, copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible,[®] copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,[®] NIV.[®] Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.[®] Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

The brief excerpts from Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that AAWS has reviewed or approved the contents of this publication, or that AAWS necessarily agrees with the views expressed herein. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, or in any other non-A.A. context, does not imply otherwise. Additionally, while A.A. is a spiritual program, A.A. is not a religious program. Thus, A.A. is not affiliated or allied with any sect, denomination, or specific religious belief.

The profiles in this workbook are composite characteristics of persons who have had the courage to work the steps on various issues in their lives and on their own addictive behaviors. Names, ages, and situations have been modified to protect their anonymity.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-800-323-9400.

ISBN 978-1-4964-4211-6

Printed in the United States of America

26 25 24 23 22 21 20
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This workbook is dedicated to every fellow struggler who has had the courage to face the truth about themselves, the humility to abandon their flawed attempts at living, and the willingness to find God's truth and live accordingly.

CONTENTS

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous	vi
The Twelve Steps	vii
Introduction	ix
STEP ONE	1
STEP TWO	11
STEP THREE	21
STEP FOUR	30
STEP FIVE	40
STEP SIX	48
STEP SEVEN	57
STEP EIGHT	66
STEP NINE	74
STEP TEN	83
STEP ELEVEN	92
STEP TWELVE	101
Concluding Thoughts	111
Scripture Index	113

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Copyright © A.A. World Services, Inc.

The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our problems and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps used in *The Life Recovery Workbook* have been adapted with permission from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

INTRODUCTION

Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. . . . But—when God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. (Titus 3:3-5)

This workbook is about transformation from the death grip of an addiction to food to the restoration of life. It's about walking humbly, righteously, and mercifully with God while accepting his will. Often in our addiction, we oppose God, argue with him, plead with him for healing, and methodically cut other people out of our lives. We end up separated from God and from the people that care for us. We feel abandoned by all. The Twelve Steps are a path of finding that humble walk that leads us out of self-centered living that led to eating disorders to acceptance and a closer relationship with God.

We will be examining the Twelve Steps individually to consider the challenging spiritual lessons that allow us to move beyond our compulsions and addictions. Each step has a new task for us in our recovery, but none of the steps stand alone. To effectively move through our bondage to acceptance, we will work the steps in order. Each step prepares us for the next one, as we develop a greater sense of openness to God's plan and purpose in our lives.

The path of recovery involves hard and sometimes painful work. But it is worth the work. We see the Twelve Steps as a path and a process that makes us better disciples and more

committed followers of Jesus Christ. Honesty, humility, and courage are vital components of faith that can move us back to a vibrant way of living as a follower of Jesus. Welcome to the journey.

STARTING AND LEADING A GROUP

Recovery is best experienced in the context of a group. Two or more willing people can form a powerful bond as they study and work these steps together. With little effort on your part, your struggles, problems, and hang-ups become a blessing to the group. As you open up, everyone else will feel more free to share from their own lives.

Being the leader of a group is actually quite simple. You can find many books on how to lead a small group, but here's a simple and effective way to do it:

1. Find a location in your home, a church, a workplace, or school, and obtain permission (if necessary) to form the group.
2. Put up a few flyers announcing the time and place, calling it a support group for eating disorders, recovery group, or Twelve Step group.
3. Show up early, arrange the chairs, make some coffee, and welcome people as they arrive.
4. Start when you say you will start by opening in prayer and by reading the Twelve Steps and the correlating Scriptures.
5. Ask if anyone would like to share for three or four minutes. Don't allow others to "fix" the speaker, and if he or she goes on too long, be sure to enforce the time limit.
6. Make sure everyone has a copy of the workbook. Ask them to study Step One for discussion at the next meeting.
7. End when you say you will end by reading the Lord's Prayer.

INTRODUCTION

8. Be sure that everyone knows where to get a workbook and a *Life Recovery Bible*, if they don't already have one.
9. E-mail us—Stephen Arterburn at sarterburn@newlife.com; David Stoop at drstoop@cox.net—and tell us how it's going.
10. Feel good that you are allowing God to use you.

Please remember that working the steps is an art, not a formula. Most often, it is an individualized process.

God be with you on this journey. We pray that you will find healing, serenity, and peace of mind.



STEP 1

PROFILE

When we are overweight or obese, the last thing we want to do is confront the reality of our size. We only look at our face in a mirror, either to put on our makeup, shave, or to fix our hair.

Tammy was like that. She preferred putting on her makeup and fixing her hair in the car, where all she could see in the mirror was her face and her head. Tammy taught third grade and didn't need to look in the mirror to realize her size. While teaching one day, she suddenly noticed that she could no longer fit in the aisles between her students' desks.

When she left school that day, she sat in her car in the parking lot and cried. This experience was a wake-up call. Her overeating was out of control. She knew she was gaining weight but had refused to confront the fact, as many overweight people do. It was time to do something about her weight. Tammy knew she was powerless to control her weight on her own, and her situation had become unmanageable.

The last time she visited the doctor, she had weighed just under 240 pounds. That was two years ago. She decided she had to face the embarrassment of seeing her doctor again and being weighed. When she did, she was told she now weighed 350 pounds. She had heard about Overeaters Anonymous groups, but she had always resisted attending. Now her resistance was done, and she began attending a group regularly.

When she saw the doctor a year later, her weight had dropped to 297 pounds. She marveled at the difference 53 pounds made in her life. It was much easier to walk, work, drive, and even sleep. Looking back to the year before, she was amazed that she had been able to even function as well as she did.

Tammy commented on how her weight was not related to ever being lazy. She was always a hard worker, one that ran around the office doing the work of three in hopes of being accepted by the “normal folks.”

For Tammy, weighing 350 pounds was tough. It was hard work carrying all those extra pounds everywhere she went. The good news at this point was that she had given up 53 pounds of baggage—both physically and emotionally—and she is becoming lighter each week. Her goal is to have as little baggage as possible. It takes hard work, dedication, and complete faith in Jesus Christ, but he will carry our load if we will ask him. We are truly powerless to do it in our own strength.

Needless to say, Tammy’s emotions have been all over the place. In the past, she always stuffed away the sad, painful emotions by eating large amounts of comfort food. She would eat until she was emotionally numb, which made her feel safe. She has since stopped medicating with food, and it’s incredible for her to actually feel her emotions—good and bad. Of course, some days she wants to run to the refrigerator and indulge herself with food. But, amazing as it sounds, this is when she’s learning to press into God even harder and ask him to walk with her through the emotions at hand.

STEP ONE

We admitted that we were powerless over our problems and that our lives had become unmanageable.

It’s interesting that the first word in the first step is *we*. I can’t work on the problems in my life on my own. The resolu-

tion comes through the *we*. Tammy increasingly isolated herself over the years from other relationships in order to hide her eating behaviors. Then if her eating suddenly got out of control, no one would be around to see it. She was powerless, but she was not helpless. So she got help. The Twelve Steps teach us that recovery and healing always take place in the context of the *we*.

This is true of anything focused on our spirits. Spiritual transformation always begins in community. At the start of Jesus' ministry, he began by gathering people around him as his disciples. The power of the early church in the book of Acts is directly related to their reputation for loving one another. So even recovery related to our eating disorders needs to take place in some sort of community, whether it's a support group for overeaters, an Eating Disorders Anonymous group, or simply a small group we gather around us. We have to stay connected as we look deep inside ourselves to get an understanding of what creates our insanity.

The key point in Step One has to do with the reality of our powerlessness. It's not a term we like. In fact, it's a term and a reality that we seek to avoid as much as possible. But when it comes to eating issues, we have tried and tried in our own power to overcome the swings in our weight. We lose weight only to gain it back, and we always seem to gain a little bit more on top of what we've lost before.

Admitting that we are powerless is to admit that something or someone has beaten us and is more powerful than our own wills. This injures our pride, so we keep on acting as if we can control food. It's in our sin nature to rebel at the idea of powerlessness because it signifies our inability to escape our life dependencies in our own strength.

To jump into recovery with both feet is good, but we must go even deeper. Not only must we admit and accept our powerlessness over our eating, we must also concede that our lives are unmanageable. This strikes the second blow to our pride

and sense of self-sufficiency. When under the influence of addictive thinking, a person believes, “I can handle anything. I can fix this by myself, without anyone else having to be involved.”

Here is one example from Scripture of how people can struggle with powerlessness. Naaman had a high-ranking position in the military that blinded him to his powerlessness (see 2 Kings 5:1-15). He began to demand things from life, thinking that he was special because of his position. Like Naaman, we will find that this type of pride that resists input and direction from others is what leads us to isolation. Only God can deal with this rebellion in our hearts. The consequences of our eating disorders are sometimes the only way God can break through to us. For Tammy, it was as simple as not being able to walk down the aisle between the desks in her classroom.

Sometimes we arrive at powerlessness and unmanageability by losing everything, as Job did. Being in recovery and trying to walk a spiritual path does not mean that we will be spared from snags and obstacles. In these times, recovery can appear to be hopeless and not worth the work. The rebel in us that wants control will counsel, “This is just too hard. Your trouble must mean that God doesn’t like you.” At this point, we need a group of people to continue pointing us to God no matter what happens, people who will nurture hope even in the midst of difficult places. As we hit bottom and face our powerlessness over all of life, we need encouragers.

By exploring our powerlessness, we will have to confront and oppose negative ideas that tell us that being powerless means being a victim. The truth is that by coming to the end of our own power, we develop enough humility to hear the voice of God and do his will.

The apostle Paul—before his conversion and transformation, when he was still known as Saul—could not surrender to his powerlessness because it placed him in opposition to God. He

was intoxicated by the power he could wield. Yet God pursued Saul—despite his power-hungry, murderous state of mind—to call him to a new direction, to make him a totally transformed person, and to give him a new purpose. God pursued Saul so that he could stop persecuting the gospel and start preaching it. To accomplish this, God made him totally blind and dependent on others to lead, feed, and shelter him. Saul had to accept his powerlessness in order to be used by God in powerful and amazing ways.

We must first accept our powerlessness and inability to manage before we can be freed from addiction and become a channel for God in ways we could never imagine. We are so schooled in the thought that we can do anything we put our minds to that it is almost impossible to envision the power of God in us doing what we have not been able to do to this point. Shining through human vessels, God is in us and gives us the ability to recover, to accept powerlessness, and to accept inability to manage on our own. We are then open to a life powered by God rather than by our dependencies, our addictions, or our fallible selves.

QUESTIONS FOR STEP ONE

Trapped *Genesis 16:1-15*

1. How is my experience of powerlessness similar to Hagar's experience? How is it different?

LIFE RECOVERY: EATING DISORDERS

2. How have I tried to escape from the pain related to my eating issues?

3. What has been my experience of anger in my struggle? What scares me about my anger?

4. How have I experienced sadness related to my eating disorder? What scares me about my sadness?

5. What are some of my fears about facing my issues?

6. Where can I see God in this process right now?

All Is Darkness *Job 6:2-13*

1. Job is very clear about the pain he is feeling. Describe the pain you're experiencing regarding your eating issues.

2. In what ways have I felt totally powerless in my food addiction?

3. In what ways have I tried to be faithful to God in the midst of my compulsive behavior?

4. How can Job's experience help me understand my experience of powerlessness?

Worn Out from Sobbing *Psalms 6:1-10*

1. How does my sadness affect my relationships?

LIFE RECOVERY: EATING DISORDERS

2. In what ways have others misunderstood my food addiction?

3. David seems to project his anger onto God. That's why we need to get comfortable expressing our anger in relationships, especially our relationship with God. Anger can be a protest. In what ways have I brought my protest into a relationship?

4. Who in my circle of friends would be able to help me restore my confidence in God?

Breaking the Cycle *Ecclesiastes 1:1-18*

1. How have I tried to break the cycle of my eating patterns?

2. What strategies have I relied on when I've tried to break the old eating habits?

3. What prevents me from letting go of my own control and declaring that I am powerless?

Like Little Children *Mark 10:13-16*

1. When I feel powerless, do I feel like a little child? How does that feel?

2. When do I feel most cared for?

3. How does being childlike help me depend on God?

The Paradox of Powerlessness *2 Corinthians 4:7-10*

1. Remember some examples of when you have accepted your own powerlessness and embraced God's powerfulness. Describe them in this space below.

LIFE RECOVERY: EATING DISORDERS

2. How do I respond to trouble?

3. How do I respond to being perplexed?

4. What do I do when it feels like God has abandoned me?

*There is great power in our
realizing that we are powerless.*