

Actions for Eating Disorder Recovery

This workbook is a combination of action steps and journal entries that you can use in your recovery. I used this process myself over a 4-year period to recover from 16 years of bulimia (related blog entry: <http://transcendbulimia.com/archives/45>). As you work through these activities, take your time and go at your own pace. They are meant to align your mind, body and spirit and to nurture your desire for self-care.

I did not do this alone – I got help from a medical intuitive, medical professionals, nutritionists, my dentist, my personal life coach -- and towards the last year – I finally told my husband. It feels better when there are people to support you and I encourage you to select a healing support team.

Special Note: I am planning to create a larger workbook with coaching and activities for recovery from eating disorders. This is a chapter from the workbook and I am providing it as a free gift to you – I hope it helps you in your recovery. I would really appreciate your feedback and comments or questions – it would help me ensure that I am creating a resource that works for people. If you'd like, I will also provide a free coaching session to anyone who provides comments and feedback.

I wish you all the best in your recovery and would like to offer you my support and love!

With love,

Heather

<http://TranscendBulimia.com>

An uplifting journey of recovery from 16 years of bulimia.

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This section has a summary of some of the actions I took and is intended as an example only. This activity is meant for you to find out what's really in your heart and take action from there. If you'd like coaching or support with these activities, please let me know. You can e-mail me at: Heather@TranscendBulimia.com.

Actions I Took	Examples	Outcome	Actions You Can Take
Identified what I really wanted in my life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A job I love ▪ A simple life ▪ Time for fun and rest ▪ Friends who love me unconditionally ▪ The ability to cook healthy foods and the time to eat my meals at my own pace ▪ Peaceful days ▪ A sense of meaning & fulfillment in my life ▪ Time to sleep at least 7 hours each night ▪ Inner joy ▪ Freedom from bulimia 	Once I identified what I really wanted, I was motivated to remove what was getting in the way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify what you really want in your life. Focus on what you DO want, rather than what you don't want. ▪ If all you know is what you don't want, start there and then make the list of what you do want.

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<p>Created my list of boundaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I need my own personal space. It's too difficult to share small spaces with people. I get my own hotel room, instead of staying with people in their homes, for example. Or if I'm spending a weekend or the week with friends or family, I set up "alone time" so that I can recharge. ▪ Follow an easy schedule, without overworking. ▪ Focus on one thing at a time instead of multi-tasking. ▪ Only commit to things I really want to do, including money I could make in my business. ▪ When traveling, get an apartment or efficiency hotel room with kitchen so that I can cook my healthy, organic foods. 	<p>I started to feel empowered to meet my own needs. It made me feel strong and capable – and cared for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are your boundaries? What are the guidelines you want in your life so that you feel your best? ▪ Make a list of these boundaries and decide which are negotiable and which are non-negotiable. ▪ Experiment with voicing your needs with respect to your boundaries. Experiment with making choices that support caring for yourself.
<p>Removed things I was tolerating: Things that irritated me and sucked my energy away. Things & people that I felt were not right for me.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friends who were negative, made me feel bad or sucked my energy (people who made me feel drained). ▪ Clutter – clutter drains us of our energy. I forced myself to take time to clean up my office and my home. All junk drawers, piles, things that needed to be thrown away. ▪ My job – I created a plan to reduce my living expenses (drastically) and focus on a simple life. This allowed me to make plans to leave my job and start my own business. ▪ Help from my husband – I started asking him to help me with things so that I was not so overloaded anymore. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I had so many things in my life that were frustrating. I felt frustrated and irritated so often that I wondered if I'd ever be happy. ▪ Removing these things gave me some space & energy to focus on what I did want in my life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make a list of the things in your life that you are tolerating. What frustrates you? ▪ What will it take to remove them from your life? ▪ Who can help you do this?

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Started to put myself first	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In every situation, at work and at home, I started to ask myself, “what can I do to ensure that I get what I want from this situation?” ▪ If I was asked to do something at work that I knew meant many overtime hours or lack of sleep, I’d figure out how to ensure that I got help so that I could still meet my own needs. With some problem solving and creativity, I was usually successful at getting help and meeting my goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I was still able to be seen as responsible & successful at work. In fact, often people were excited to help or take over the assignment. I never would have known that if I still believed I had to do it all myself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Now that you know what you want in your life, how can you ensure that you meet your needs in every (or most every) situation? ▪ Ask yourself how can you get what you want – and take care of yourself? Ask this whenever someone asks you to do something. Or whenever you want to do something that might push you out of self-care.
Built my personal foundation of self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Got at least 7 hours of sleep per night. ▪ Experimented with an exercise plan that worked for me & felt healthy to my body. ▪ Took time out of each day to read or do something fun that would feel nurturing. ▪ Asked my husband to nurture me by giving me a shoulder massage. ▪ Took time to “wind down” each night before going to bed. ▪ Took whole days off from doing any chores or work. ▪ Started writing in a journal so I could better understand who I was and what I wanted. ▪ Wrote my ideal vision of myself so I could work toward it. ▪ Started to meditate by doing healing meditations each day. ▪ Took the time to plan, shop for and prepare healthy, organic foods that would nourish my body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This was key to my success. I had never felt so well rested and well taken care of in my life – and it was all coming from me! I realized that I could care for myself better than anyone else could care for me. This gave me a lot of confidence in myself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What can you start doing for yourself every day? Make a list of things you can do to get enough rest, nutrition, exercise and fun. ▪ These are the basics – when you build a strong foundation, it’s easier to take care of other areas of your life. This is what most of us ignore and yet it’s key to our recovery.

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<p>Experimented with ways of eating that allowed me to find my own normal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I was constantly nauseas after eating. This was a big trigger for me, so no matter what I did to change my beliefs and values, if I felt ill digestively, I ultimately had a relapse. ▪ I finally found the Body Ecology Diet, by Donna Gates (see the Resources section of my blog: http://transcendbulimia.com). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This allowed me to be free of my sugar addiction and stabilize my blood sugar levels. My need to binge disappeared. My digestion improved dramatically. ▪ It feels like a miracle. I am getting my certification in this so I can help others with this eating plan. Many bulimics have an overgrowth of yeast in their livers, which fuels the need to binge. I would never have believed this if I didn't get a test to show that I had this condition & subsequently try the diet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Talk to your health care professional about options for a nutritional plan. I found that alternative doctors, like Ayurvedic MDs, Naturopaths and Environmental MDs were the best at working with eating disorders. They don't try to give you pills & medications. They treat you like an equal and help you regain your inner body health.

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Journal – Taking Action to Improve Your Health & Well-being

1. Make a list of how you really want to live your life. Keep in mind the following:

- a. Write your list as if someone waved a magic wand over your head so you could have anything you want.
- b. Write your list as if money & approval are no object.
- c. Concentrate on how you want to feel (joyful, peaceful, happy, light, free, etc.).
- d. Use as many of your senses as possible (what do you see, taste, touch, feel, smell?).
- e. Instead of focusing on what you don't want (a negative statement), focus on what you DO want.
- f. Focus on the what – without concern for the how. This is your dream list, the how works itself out if you believe in your dreams.
- g. To do this exercise, go to a quiet, comfortable place – make the environment warm and inviting. Consider lighting a candle or turning on soft music.
- h. Leave all “shoulds” out – this is your dream! Focus on what's really in your heart.

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2. **Make a list of your boundaries. What guidelines do you want to create in order to keep your life in balance?**
 - a. Consider things like how you schedule your time, doing favors for others, taking care of others, speaking up when you need something, speaking up if you are uncomfortable, asking for what you want – or asking for help, having your own space, etc.
 - b. What guidelines will allow you to live the life of your dreams (consider what will allow you to create what you wrote in question #1)?
 - c. Which boundaries are non-negotiable? (e.g., I must have at least 7 hours of sleep per night – I avoid anything that comes up and gets in the way of getting enough sleep.)

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3. **Make a list of all the things you are tolerating (things that frustrate you every time you look at or think about them) – and create a plan for how you will remove these tolerations from your life.** Take it as slowly or quickly as you want to – go at a pace that feels good & gentle.
 - a. What drains you of your energy?
 - b. What is on your “to do” list that keeps getting moved & frustrates you?
 - c. What piles of things are sitting in your home or office that you constantly feel like you “should” take care of?
 - d. What steps can you take – and in what time frame – to remove these tolerations?
 - e. Consider getting help from friends, family or a professional (e.g., professional organizer, personal coach, etc.).

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4. **Make a list areas of your life are you putting other things or people first – before taking care of yourself. Create an action plan to put yourself first – to consider yourself first in all situations.** When you take care of yourself, you have much more energy to be there for others.
 - a. What are you doing that makes you feel like you neglect yourself?
 - b. Who are you with when you feel constrained from being who you really are?
 - c. What favors are you doing for others that feel like obligations or make you feel tired?
 - d. What activities are you scheduling that started out fun, but end up feeling overwhelming?
 - e. What do you feel like you are missing out on in life – things you really want to do, but have no time?
 - f. Create an action plan for reducing or eliminating the things that get in the way of taking care of yourself. An alternative is to create a plan for how you can ensure you take care of your needs and find a creative solution for getting the other needs met (e.g., If you need to clean your house, can you get others to help you or pay someone to do it? If your boss has an assignment that will have you up all night, can you negotiate to get help, ask a peer or direct report for help or negotiate a different due date?). Think of solutions that will allow you to get what you need (remember your boundaries) and still get the “musts” completed.

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5. Create a list of ways that you can take good care of yourself. This is your self-care list and can build a foundation of energy, peace and strength in your life. Pick one or several of them to include each day, week or month.

- a. Self-care gives you the ability to create energy reserves so that you can tackle things in your day.
- b. Self-care allows you to feel relaxed and better able to deal with normal stresses that come up in life.
- c. Ignoring self-care can lead to feelings of overwhelm and burnout.
- d. Including self-care activities can bring you closer to who you really are – and give you the peace of mind to make better choices about your health.
- e. Create your list of self-care activities to include and how often you'd like to include them in your life.
- f. Keep in mind that adding a self-care activity may mean taking something else off of your schedule – self-care is not meant to give you another “to do,” but to offer another way to spend your time.
- g. Examples of self-care:
 - i. I get plenty of sleep each night (usually between 7 – 9 hours) and feel rested when I wake up.
 - ii. I spend at least one hour to “wind down” each night before bed, reading an inspirational book, listening to soft music, meditating, etc. (Turn off the TV, put down a scary novel and stop all over-stimulating activities).
 - iii. I drink plenty of water each day.
 - iv. I take the time to select, prepare and eat healthy, nourishing and balanced meals.
 - v. I choose the amount and type of exercise that is healthy for my body.
 - vi. I take the time to meditate each day.
 - vii. When I eat meals, I only focus on what I am eating, rather than multi-tasking (reading, surfing the net, etc.).
 - viii. I schedule plenty of time to get to meetings and appointments, so that I can go at a leisurely pace.
 - ix. I have hobbies that I love and take time to do them when I want to.
 - x. I do work that I love.
 - xi. I spend my time with friends who accept me for who I truly am and who are energizing to be with.
 - xii. I take a bubble bath or get a massage.
 - xiii. I take the time to relax and breathe deeply periodically each day as a rest from what I am doing.
 - xiv. I take care of my body when it needs something – I pay attention to hunger, thirst, fatigue, etc. and give my body the healthy care it needs.

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6. Create a nutritional plan that will meet the needs of healing your body. Get a food journal so that you can start to write down how you feel after your meals.

- a. Select healthy, nutritious foods that will help heal your body. You may need important B-vitamins, like folate, B-6 and B-12 in order to replenish the stores that you have lost from having an eating disorder. If these B vitamins are too low, it can create depression or low moods, keeping you stuck in the cycle of an eating disorder. Other things to check are your need for essential fatty acids, which also play a role in your mood and healthy metabolism. Talk to a nutritionist, Naturopathic Doctor (ND), or Doctor of Environmental Medicine who can help you create a plan to bring your body back to health. Consider blood, urine and stool tests from Great Smokies Labs to find out how your body is metabolizing foods and what vitamins, minerals, supplements and good bacteria you may be missing. This can help you create a nutritional plan for health.
- b. If you have digestive distress, talk to your doctor about this so that you can find a way of eating to heal your digestion. I used The Body Ecology Diet, by Donna Gates – and had consultations with her to help tailor a healthy eating program, which fixed my digestion.
- c. Pay attention to what you eat and how it makes your body and mind feel during & afterwards. Write this in your journal.
- d. Consider tuning into your inner body to find out what it needs in terms of type and quantity of food. Get quiet and look inside. Find your own way of eating that works for you. Experiment and adjust as necessary.
- e. Read my blog entries on trusting your body & how the body feels in recovery.
- f. Create a plan to fit healthy nutrition into your life:
 - i. Identify your nutritional goals
 - ii. Identify someone who can help you create and adjust your nutritional plan
 - iii. Identify how you will make time for this in your life (what do you need to get rid of, so you have time for this?)
 - iv. Create a plan to have time for your meals – consider making this time stress-free, with easy and light conversation, soft music, etc. Eating meals in a stress-free way and with plenty of time to eat at your own pace allows your body to digest more healthfully. This helps keep your body in balance.
- g. Bringing your body back to nutritional health takes time – trust the process and stick with it! You'll find that your body begins to support you as your need for vitamins and minerals, your hormone levels, your nervous system and your organs start to heal. Healing your body is as essential as healing your mind & spirit in recovery. They all support each other.

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7. Make a list of the roles you are playing in your life (e.g., student, roommate, spouse, your job, parent, daughter, etc.).

Identify if you change in small ways in each of these roles.

- a. Are you aware of “playing a role” in any area of your life?
- b. How do you feel when you play that role?
- c. Do you feel a wall between yourself and your friends or acquaintances?
- d. Do you feel afraid to be “the real you?”
- e. Do you know the real you?
- f. Go back to question #1 and see if you can find the real you there.
- g. Pay attention in every interaction – just notice if you are saying one thing, but wanting to say another. Notice if you are quiet when you want to speak up. Make notes on this in your journal.
- h. Select one thing you will experiment with each week or each day to let the real you shine through.
- i. Start experimenting with being the real you in different situations and write in your journal what happens.
- j. Decide if you want to be with people or in situations where you feel you can’t be the real you – but first, experiment with allowing yourself to be who you are in these situations!

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8. Start to pay attention to your beliefs and self-talk. Write what you are noticing in your journal.

- a. Catch your thoughts as you go through your day and evening. Are they negative or positive?
- b. How do you feel when you have negative thoughts? Positive thoughts?
- c. Would you like to feel good more often? If so, consider that thoughts are just thoughts. Our minds are conditioned to focus on the negative and feel like we are “not good enough.” With this kind of thinking, nothing will ever be good enough, even if something good happens – the good feeling is brief, isn’t it?
- d. Experiment with saying “delete” whenever you have a negative thought and replacing it with a positive affirmation.
 - i. Positive affirmations are stated in the present tense and without any negatives.
 - ii. I am joyful, peaceful and confident in every moment is a positive affirmation.
 - iii. I am not afraid -- is **not** a positive affirmation.
 - iv. Whenever you use “don’t,” “not,” and “no,” you end up focusing on what you don’t want, rather than what you do want. All affirmations focus on the positive.

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- 9. Learn to trust yourself and the process of life. Start paying attention to how you feel about your life and where you are feeling a need for control. See if the need for control has fear at its root. FEAR is just a thought – it is False Evidence Appearing Real.**
- a. Most of us have bought into the belief that we have to work really hard to get or keep what we have. We are taught to fear or distrust people and things.
 - b. Many times, we have been taught that what we have will be gone tomorrow – we even think this about our bodies – that somehow, we'll be in great jeopardy if we eat too much.
 - c. Eating is a way to control our bodies because we don't trust them to take care of us – and ultimately, we don't trust our empowerment to create the lives we want.
 - d. Start paying attention to your thoughts – where does fear come up?
 - e. Experiment with letting the fear go – use the exercise in question #8 and replace it with a positive affirmation.
 - f. Say something like, "I trust the process of life to take care of me." And "I trust my body to take care of me."
 - g. Stay very aware of your thoughts, especially with fear. Decide if you want to live your life in fear or in trust.
 - h. If you decided to trust, instead of feeling fear, what's the worst that could happen? Write this in your journal.**
 - i. What would the benefits be if you decided to trust the process of life, rather than fear it? Write this in your journal.**
 - j. How would you feel if you trusted the process of life? How do you feel when you fear it? How do you want to feel?**