

Eating Disorder Support Services

Recovery Coaching

Every year in the UK and globally, millions of people struggle with eating disorders. Furthermore, many of these sufferers and their families are faced with the life-threatening effects of their illness because the problem has not been recognised or treated soon enough.

Recovery Coaching is one intervention that can be effective in helping people deal with and overcome eating disorders. This information sheet explores what recovery coaching is, how it works, the benefits, and how it can assist people with eating disorders.

What is recovery coaching?

Experienced recovery coaches can help a client live through, cope with, and overcome an eating disorder. Recovery coaches will have personal and/or professional experience related to recovery from an eating disorder, meaning they are able to offer a very personal, empathetic form of support.

Recovery coaches can help clients with a variety of subjects, but the general aim is to empower the client; recovery coaches want to see you make healthy, independent lifestyle choices, develop resilience and confidence, find your own answers, and become increasingly able to live a fulfilling, meaningful, and healthy life.

Emotional support and practical advice could be provided on the following subjects (as well as other topics):

- Eating disorder thoughts, feelings and behaviours (and the reasons behind them);
- Body image issues;
- Associated mental health issues e.g. OCD;
- Balanced nutrition and practical help with cooking and eating;
- Emotional coping strategies (and the reasons behind them);
- Communication skills and social/ relationship issues;
- The benefits of positive exercise and hobbies;
- Relaxation techniques (including the provision of massage therapy or restorative yoga sessions, if desired);
- Life choices and how they affect recovery e.g. career choices;
- Self-esteem and assertiveness;
- Educating loved ones to help them support long-term recovery;
- Exploration of other treatments/specialists that might be able to help.

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How does recovery coaching work?

Coaches will have a sincere interest in your life and experiences, so that they can use the knowledge they gain about you for your benefit. To a coach, the question of “how can I use what I know about my client to help empower them?” is always significant.

Initially, a recovery coach might ask you some questions about your particular circumstances and issues. However, your time with the coach will be yours, so you are likely to do more talking than they are. This can be scary at first, especially if you are used to bottling things up inside. However, your coach will be aware of this and will support you as you find your voice. As you find your voice, try to be completely open and honest so that you can gain the most from the therapeutic process.

What are the benefits of recovery coaching?

The benefits from recovery coaching depend on many elements, including how motivated and committed you are to the process. Some of the main benefits include:

- Confidentiality, trust and sincere interest - Even well-meaning friends can't always be trusted to keep private information private. A recovery coach will offer you complete confidentiality under most conditions. The exception being if they felt you might be of harm to yourself or others, in which case, they might need to break confidentiality. Even then, most recovery coaches will discuss this with you first in order to gain your consent.
- The chance to express yourself freely, without fear of judgement - Unfortunately, this is not always possible in ordinary relationships. We can find ourselves not only being judged by others, but also adapting to how we feel a person wants us to be. Your recovery coach will accept and respect you as you are; they are not there to judge.
- Insight into yourself - Including insight into your thinking and emotional patterns, such as those that might knock down self-esteem and hamper your recovery.
- An opportunity to alleviate stress and anxiety - This is gained through having an attentive and empathic recovery coach and the appointment space and time set aside for you to talk.
- Support - The support to work through emotional thoughts, as well as gain a new, healthy perspective on life.
- Effective strategies - Recovery coaching provides you with the opportunity to learn effective strategies for communication, resolving interpersonal conflict, and challenging eating disordered thinking and behaviour.
- Empathy and inspiration – Recovery coaches will have personal and/or professional experience



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related to recovery from a variety of eating disorders. They will have learnt from numerous people working towards recovery, meaning that they will be equipped with knowledge and ideas about what has helped others to overcome eating disordered thoughts and behaviours.

Recovery coaches working with people suffering from eating disorders might need to involve medical professionals, dieticians, or even social workers and family members. The reason for this is that the nature of the problem is complex and potentially life-threatening; it is going to need more than the assistance of one recovery coach to help you overcome your problems. A recovery coach will focus on the emotional and practical components of the problem, helping you understand and deal with your obsessive thoughts about weight, self-image, and self-esteem.

Preparing for recovery coaching

It is important not to expect any quick fixes from recovery coaching, but to see it as a 'journey'. Journeys take time. They have ups and downs, steps forward and steps back. Unearthing and confronting deep-seated, negative self-images and beliefs that contribute to the eating disorder is going to be challenging. However, the important thing is that you would have started your journey and you are not alone on that journey.