

Recovery Projects

These projects can serve a number of purposes. Sometimes when we feel “off” and are fighting to overcome the urge to engage in eating disorder behaviors, we need distractions; we need a reminder of why we are choosing recovery over our eating disorder. Sometimes we find ourselves with extra time in the day that used to be devoted to an unhealthy behavior and we need something new and positive to fill that time. No matter what the reason, this list of projects is here for you to use whenever you need it! We all need a little inspiration now and then to get our creative juices flowing; allow this list serve as a jumping off point for your own creative expression!

1. Make a list of what is really important to you. What do you value? What do you strive to accomplish with your life? Ask yourself if your eating disorder is getting you closer to your goals or moving you farther away from your goals.
2. Make a list of five things that you have been able to accomplish already by making attempts to conquer your eating disorder. Or, if you haven't been recovering long enough, make a list of five things you WILL be able to experience when you begin to win the battle over your eating disorder. Also, make a note about how each item made (or will make) you feel.
3. Make a list of people you have drifted away from, fought with, or lost touch with because of your eating disorder. For extra credit: send an email, make a phone call, or send a card to everyone to say hi. Extra, extra credit: invite them to meet you for coffee/shopping/movies/etc. After all, giving up your eating disorder means you'll have a lot more free time; might as well fill it up with something fun!
4. Identify one recurring difficulty that you're having with recovery, and think of at least one strategy or thought that can help you overcome it.
5. List three things that your eating disorder has helped you to ignore — for example, some problem, fear or person you don't want to confront. Then, list at least one NEW way to combat the problem, or outline some steps to help you beat it. If you don't know of a solution, ask your friends, family members or online chat buddies for advice!
6. Today, do something that is outside of your comfort zone; it can be big or small. For example, make a goal to eat a food that is on your “unsafe” list, or you can say hello to someone you don't know. You can call someone you're scared to call, or you can go out in public without make-up. Whatever. Good luck!
7. Make a list of things that make your life fulfilling. This can include people, hobbies, environments — anything!
8. Start a “Gratitude Journal.” Write down anything you are grateful for, or anything that happened each day that was wonderful, or things that make life worth living. Whenever you're down, pick up the journal and remember that there ARE things to be happy for.
9. Have you conquered one of your ED rules? What was it? What did you do to overcome it? How did it feel when that rule wasn't ruling you anymore? Or... What is the next rule you want to squash? What do you need in order to accomplish that goal?

10. A question to ponder: at the end of your life, when you are looking back on the life you lived, and remembering everything you've done, what would be the one thing that you'd be most proud of? (It can be something you've done, or something you'd like to do — anything!)
11. Think of a person (or more than one, if you're ambitious) that has hurt you or affected your life in a negative way in the past. Write a letter to them (you don't have to send it) about what they did that hurt you, how it affected you, how it made you feel about them, and what you want/expect from them now. Then, if you feel like it, write another letter that you would actually send to that person, and send it. Then, think of another person who has affected your life in a positive way. Write a letter to them, telling them how their actions affected your life.
12. Make a list of "coping strategies" to have on hand for any time things get rough. Basically, just list anything you can do to comfort yourself (in a HEALTHY and constructive manner) that will help you make it through until things get easier.
13. Make a list of all the recovery resources that are available to you. The "available support" list should include things like specific friends/family members' names, therapists, doctors, etc. Write down all of their contact information as well, and keep it in an easily-accessible place.
14. Make a "Recovery Box" (or folder, or journal). Find a box (a big shoebox can work) and cut out magazine pictures and make a collage all over it, or paint it, or wrap it with pretty paper, etc. Inside the box, keep anything that relates to your recovery. You can put anything from informative articles, letters from friends from recovery message boards, old food journals, to random items that just make you smile. Whatever you put in your box is up to you. The intent of this project is to have a collection of physical things that you can go to when you need a little boost.
15. Make a list of 10 words that describe your ED experience. Make another list of 10 words that describe what your life is/will be like when you have conquered your ED.
16. (For those who have been in recovery for at least a few weeks). Look back at how far you've come in just the past few weeks. Think of things you did, and things you felt, (insert period of time) ago, and compare it to today. A month from now, look back on today, and see how much further you got. If you see that you slipped backwards on anything, identify anything that may be hampering your efforts.
17. Find something to take care of. Get a plant, a pet, or volunteer for a good cause. Caring for others can help you stay motivated to care for yourself.
18. Imagine that you are one of your parents/friends/guardians. You are faced with the difficult situation of watching a loved one (in this case, yourself in real life) struggle with an eating disorder. You want to let her know how important she is, and how it hurts you to see her hurting herself. Write a letter to her (you), telling her all the reasons why she deserves to be happy, and why she doesn't deserve to be in so much pain.
19. This one is good for discussion and sharing purposes: Imagine your ED as a kind of "wall." Describe your wall, and your reaction to it. How high is it? What is it made of?

20. We've all experienced those really dark times in life, where everything seems to go wrong, and nothing you do seems to help. Think of a hard time that has now passed. What sort of good things happened as a result of that difficult time, that wouldn't have occurred otherwise? Have there been any major roadblocks that blocked your intended path that actually steered you in a better direction? If you're going through a difficult time now (if you're in recovery, this definitely applies to you), what positive changes do you think will happen in your life as a result of these difficulties?
21. If you could be any animal, what would you be and why? If you had to pick a color to represent your personality, what color would it be and why?
22. Commit a random act of kindness; anything helpful and unexpected. Then, tell that person to pass it on, and commit a random act of kindness themselves.
23. Something to ponder: If you could trade one of your problems for one of someone else's problems, which would you take? Or would you keep your own?
24. Do something today to treat your body as something to love and take care of. As an example, get a massage; do something active that makes you feel strong, graceful and beautiful.
25. List five reasons why you matter in this world.
26. Find a mantra (a short phrase that you can repeat to yourself when you're struggling) to remind yourself that this is a long journey and you're going to make it, step by step, and the hard times won't last forever. Some examples of mantras are: "I can do this!" , "I want to know what it is to really LIVE!" or "I AM worth it!"
27. A quick self-quiz: What would I do differently if I knew I could not fail? What do I want more of in my life? Where is all my energy focused right now? What am I most passionate about? What's more important to me than anything else? Who or what is in charge of my life right now? Which answer (or answers) to the questions above would I like to change? What would those ideal answers be?
28. Create a Life Map: Get out a sheet of paper, and draw a big line, or a spiral, or whatever works best for you. On that line/spiral/circle, create a time-line of the major events in your life, starting a birth and ending now. Then, continue on with your time-line, writing events that you WANT to happen in the future. If you're not sure, put it aside for a bit and come back to it. This life map is a great tool for whenever you find yourself tempted to run back to your eating disorder. You can look at the map and all the life events listed on it and ask yourself if the behavior that you want to do next is going to move you closer to those things or away from them.
29. Ask yourself the following questions: Who am I? How do I know who I am? What does it mean to be content? Do I listen more or talk more? Why? What does it mean to nurture myself? Am I comfortable with my feelings? What makes me cry or laugh? When am I comfortable expressing my feelings? How much of my time is spent with other people and how much am I alone? Why do bad things happen? Who is responsible when something bad happens to me? How do I handle stress? Do I welcome challenges? What is my unique gift to the world?