

Reflections on Step 1

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our emotions, that our lives had become unmanageable.

“Saying that our lives had become unmanageable can sound unstable and that is the reality. It’s what brings people to a twelve-step program like Emotions Anonymous. Something about the way that we are living our lives day in and day out does not match up with the value systems that we want to embody. Admitting that we are powerless over our emotions is the first step to getting better.

If we want to hold on to the idea that we can control how we feel, our circumstances, our work, our friends and family, it will be difficult to move past the first step. Step one, like many of the steps, is a step of humility. It forces us to take a breath before we react in circumstances in order to give us a chance to act in a way that aligns with the value system we have built for ourselves.

While it might sound weak to admit that *our lives had become unmanageable*, there is actually a lot of strength required to be vulnerable and work towards being an authentic version of ourselves.” — Paul N., *EAI Treasurer*

“When I think of the word "admit" I think about entering into something - being admitted.  The way it works is that I'm admitted in so I get to enter into something.  The way Step 1 in EA works for me is I'm granted entry into a way of life that begins with being humble enough to say that I'm in need of help.  I have emotions and thoughts that are too powerful for me to manage on my own.  I'm grateful that my admission of being powerless is the admission that allows me to be admitted into a program where I can find support.  I can acknowledge that my life is too chaotic, frightening, and lonely without the help I can gain from others who are on this journey with me.  A power greater than myself is what I find in EA.  Step one simply is my ticket into a program of healing and wholeness - admit one.” — Scott J., *EAI President*

“I had to concede to my innermost self that I was powerless over my emotions in order to accept the help that was offered to me when I came to Emotions Anonymous. I had trouble with this admission because I thought I controlled my emotions a lot better than some people I witnessed expressing emotions. I saw people fighting, yelling, throwing things, crying, etc.

I didn't know I had those same feelings. And I also didn't know that as soon as I felt any strong emotion coming on I pushed it down by eating a lot of food or unhealthy food. Eating extra food for a compulsive overeater like me is like an alcoholic getting drunk. We are both numb.

Emotions Anonymous taught me that it was ok to feel. I could be safe and express my emotions. I was afraid of going off the deep end. When I looked back on my early years I saw that I reacted abnormally to situations. For example, I would laugh when most people would cry or cry when most people would laugh.

I was also depressed for most of my life, though my associates didn't know it. I was taught to put on a happy face for the world. I know my associates didn't know because later when I revealed I had plans to kill myself they couldn't believe it. They said they had no idea; I looked so happy.

Though I had a hard time with this admission, it was the best thing that ever happened to me. Most people who struggle with the steps, struggle because they are trying to do the subsequent steps, but haven't done the first step.

Step one is the only step that we have to do perfectly. All the other steps we do the best we can. To make this clearer, you have to know without a shadow of doubt that you are powerless over your emotions. No one else would know this but you, only you know your powerlessness.

Thank God for the program: the 12 steps. It's saved my life! And not only that, but it has also given me a life that is beyond my wildest dreams!” — Derita P., *EAI Trustee*

“’Our acceptance of powerlessness does not mean we are bad or lack responsibility in other areas of our life.’

When I first came into the program, the admission of powerlessness felt both familiar (even almost comforting) and like I had somehow failed. It made me recall other difficulties I had in my life, such as managing my finances, managing relationships, and staying organized. It seemed to make me feel “less.” That is what clued me in that I needed a sponsor. Luckily, we were on Step 1 at the first EA meeting I ever attended, and the woman who would soon offer to sponsor me stayed after the meeting to talk about how EA had helped her. She calmed me and left me feeling more optimistic. That’s when I knew that although I had a long road ahead, admitting powerlessness would help, not harm, me on my journey.” — Colleen C., *EAI Secretary*