

Session 11 Leader Guide:

Make Social Cues Work *for You*

Objectives

In this session, the participants will:

- Review examples of problem social cues and helpful social cues.
- Discuss ways to change problem social cues and add helpful ones.
- Review strategies for coping with social events such as parties, vacations, having visitors, and holidays.
- Make an action plan to change a problem social cue and add a helpful one.
- Learn how to gradually and safely increase steps using the pedometer.

To Do Before the Session

- If providing Food and Activity books; one per participant.
- Review Food and Activity records from last session; add comments.
- Prepare Session 11 handout for participant notebooks.

Available in the GLB Providers Portal:

<https://www.diabetesprevention.pitt.edu/my/login.aspx>

- **Guidelines for Reviewing Food and Activity Records**

Group Sharing Time (allow at least 5 minutes)

In the last session, we talked about the four keys to healthy eating out.

- Did anyone put into practice any of the four keys? How did it go?
- Did you work toward solving an eating-out problem? Did it work? If not, what went wrong? What could you do differently?

Let's take a few minutes to talk about your experiences this past week. *[Choose only a few of the following prompts to guide discussion.]*

- Overall, how did it go last week? What went well? What problems did you have? What could you do differently?
- Were you able to stay close to your calorie and fat gram goals? Follow your plan for physical activity, including lifestyle activity? *[Remind participants to graph their activity if they have not yet done so.]*
- Did you wear your pedometer? Did you add steps in your day? How?

[Problem solve with the participants to address any barriers.]

[Praise all efforts to self-monitor and to change eating and activity behaviors. Be positive and nonjudgmental. Encourage group discussion.]

Make Social Cues Work for You (page 1)

In an earlier session, we talked about **how to “take charge of what’s around you.”** We invited an imaginary film crew to walk through your house and where you work, and we looked for problem food or activity “cues,” things that would prompt you to think about eating or to be inactive, like a TV or a bag of cookies on a kitchen counter. We planned some ways to get rid of problem cues and add positive cues (for example, watch less TV, keep high-calorie foods out of the house, and keep your walking shoes in sight).

In that session, we focused on the sight and smell of food or certain activities that make you think about food. Today we’re going to talk about **social cues**, or **what other people say or do that affects your eating and activity.** Again, we will plan some ways to **reduce problem social cues** and some ways to **add positive ones.**

*[Review and discuss **Problem Social Cues** and include the following:]*

- **The sight of other people eating problem foods or being inactive.** For example, you go to a bar where you see other people eating potato chips and watching TV. Can you think of an example in your own life? Is it difficult for you when you see someone in your family or a friend eat certain foods? *[Ask participants to write brief examples on page 1.]*
- **Being offered (or pressured to eat) problem foods or being invited to do something that involves sitting for a long time** are also negative cues. For example, your spouse buys you candy for your birthday or a friend asks you to come over to watch football. What are some examples in your own life?
- **Being with peers who are rarely active.** Can you think of examples in your own life? Does this impact your activity level?
- **Being nagged** is a negative cue. For example, your spouse says, “You shouldn’t be eating that bacon. It’s too high in calories and fat.” Some people may think that nagging is helpful, but often it backfires. Does anyone nag you about your eating or activity? How do you respond?
- **Hearing complaints** is a negative cue, too. For example, your daughter says, “I hate all these vegetables you are serving.” Or your spouse says, “You’re always outside walking. You don’t have any time for your family anymore.” Do you hear complaints from anyone about your eating or activity?

Now let’s compare problem social cues with **positive or helpful social cues.** *[Review and discuss **Helpful Social Cues** and include the following:]*

- **The sight of other people eating healthy foods or being active.** For example, you go out to dinner with another participant who orders low-calorie foods or you go to an aerobics class. Can you think of any people who are good examples for you? In what way? *[Ask participants to write brief examples on page 1.]*

- **Being offered healthy foods or being invited to do something active.** For example, your mother offers you fruit salad for dessert or asks you to go for a walk. Does anyone do this for you?
- **Being praised.** For example, your spouse says, “The oatmeal was delicious this morning, honey.” Who praises you for your efforts and accomplishments?
- **Hearing compliments.** For example, your daughter says, “I like these oven-roasted vegetables you made. Thanks, Mom.” Or your spouse says, “You’re really committed to walking every day. I’m proud of you.” Does anyone compliment you?

When you respond to a social cue in the same way over and over again, you build a habit. The cue becomes paired with the way you respond, and your response becomes more and more automatic. In an earlier session, we used the example of eating popcorn whenever you go to the movies as a food cue that over time becomes a habit for many people. It works the same way with social cues.

Let’s say that since childhood, your mother has offered you second helpings of food at the dinner table. You developed a habit of accepting her offer. Now when you return home as an adult and your mother offers you second helpings, it is hard for you to refuse.

It’s important to understand that with social cues, the **other person has also learned a habit.** So, in the example we’ve just used, your mother has learned to offer you second helpings and expects that you will accept the offer. **This makes social cues even harder to change than other cues.**

To Change Problem Social Cues (page 2)

How can you change problem social cues? *[Review page 2 and include the following:]*

1. As with problem food cues, one of the best things you can do is to **stay away from the cue, if you can.** For example:
 - Move to a different room if a family member eats problem foods in front of you.
 - Skip certain parties that are just too tempting for you.
 - Socialize with people by going bowling, dancing, or to the movies. Don’t go out to eat as a way to socialize.
 - Change the subject when someone starts to criticize your eating, physical activity, or your weight.
2. **Change the cue, if you can.** This means trying to influence the other person’s habit, if you can. For example, when someone nags, complains, eats problem foods in front of you, or pressures you to eat:
 - **Discuss the problem. Brainstorm options.** For example, “It’s hard for me when you eat ice cream in front of me. It really tempting. Is there a way we could get

together and have fun, but not eat ice cream?” **Be willing to compromise** to find a solution that will work for everyone.

- **Tell people about GLB. Discuss your efforts to eat a healthier diet, be more active, and lose weight. Talk about why this is important to you.** Many people will be willing to help if they understand that you are trying to change your eating and activity habits to improve your health.
- **Ask others to praise you for your efforts and ignore your slips. This is KEY to your success.** Explain to your friends and family what would be most helpful to you. In turn, be sure to thank them when they notice your efforts and overlook your slips.

Note: One option is to role play this with the participants. Either ask one volunteer to role play with you in front of the group using an example that is meaningful to him or her, or break the group into pairs to role play and then ask volunteers to share their experience.

3. If you can't stay away from the problem social cue or change it, **practice responding in a healthier way.** Over time you will **build a new, healthier habit** and **the other person will learn a new habit, too**, because of your new response. For example:
 - **Say “No” to food offers.** If you are consistent and continue to say “No,” others will eventually stop offering.
 - One of the most important things you can do is to **show others you know they mean well, and suggest something they can do to help you. Be specific.** Most people mean well when they nag, offer food or pressure someone to eat (for example, many people think that being a good hostess means insisting that guests have second helpings). If you recognize that they mean well and give them a specific, positive alternative, they can still feel helpful and you are more likely to reach your goals, too. For example, when a hostess offers you second helpings, say, “Thanks so much for offering. You know what I'd really enjoy is some coffee.” **If you can, give them specific ideas of how to help ahead of time**, before you are confronted by a challenging situation.

Note: One option is to role play saying “No” to food offers,(e.g., “Are you sure you don't want a piece of cake?”), either with one volunteer in front of the group or by breaking the group into pairs to role play and then asking volunteers to share. Illustrate that the participants should be prepared to say “No” several times, and suggest alternatives to someone who continues to offer food.

Remember that **it takes time to break an old habit or build a new one.** Change doesn't happen overnight. And with social cues, there are at least two people involved in making

a change: yourself and someone else. **Don't expect other people to adjust instantly** to a new way of relating, any more than you expect yourself to change instantly.

To Add Helpful Social Cues (page 3)

[Review page 3 and include the following:]

Not all social cues are problems. You can use social cues to *help* you eat healthier and be more active. For example:

- **Spend time with people who are active and make healthy food choices.** For example, at parties stand next to people who spend most of their time talking and dancing instead of eating.
- **Put yourself in places where people are active.** For example, join an exercise club or sports league. Come to this program's activity sessions (if available).
- **Set up a regular "date" with others to be active.** You will be more likely to be active because you won't want to disappoint them by cancelling.
- **Ask your friends to call you to remind you to be active or to set up dates to be active.** Has anyone done this? Is it helpful?
- **Bring a low-calorie food to share.** For example, bring a fruit salad to a potluck dinner. Has anyone done this? How did it go?
- **Be the first to order when you eat out at a restaurant** and order healthy foods. This is much easier than waiting until after others order high-calorie foods and then trying to make a healthier choice. In addition, you will provide a positive social cue for other people.
- **Be social by doing something active.** For example, take a walk and talk. Go out dancing instead of going out to dinner. Start a family tradition of taking a walk after dinner instead of watching TV.
- What are some other social cues you might find helpful?

What Social Support Do You Need? (page 4)

[Review the information at the top of page 4. Ask participants to record and share their answers, if comfortable doing so. Encourage discussion.]

An important way to change negative social cues and add positive ones is to **ask people who want to support you for help.**

What people in your life want to support you?

What could they do to help you? Here are some ideas. Would any of these be helpful to you?

Review the ideas on page 4. Ask participants to check a few that they think would be helpful and add other ideas at the bottom of the chart. Encourage participants to go over this page with a supportive friend or their family members.

Social Cues are Powerful at Social Events (page 5)

Social cues are especially powerful at social events such as parties, holidays, vacations, and when you have guests in your home or are a guest in someone else's home. These events:

- **Upset our routine.** For example, you usually walk after dinner, so how do you fit walking in on a day when you're going to a party after dinner?
- **Challenge us with unique food and social cues.** For example, you go on vacation to a place you've never been before. There are dozens of appealing restaurants and you're not familiar with any of them.
- **May involve habits that have developed over many years and so can be very powerful.** For example, for the past 30 years on Thanksgiving, your family has spent the entire afternoon watching football on TV and eating.

What are some social events that are difficult for you?

Note: Get an idea of the kinds of social, cultural, or religious events the participants attend. If it is close to a holiday or vacation, you may want to focus on brainstorming options and making an action plan for these events. Additional handouts are in "Resources". Handouts include "Getting Ready for the Holidays," "Staying Active on Holidays," "Lifestyle Balance on Vacation," "Lifestyle Balance on Vacation: Problem Solving," and "Staying Active on Vacation". Review them as appropriate. They may also be used at any time during GLB.

To handle social events well, try to anticipate the problems that will occur. What exactly might be difficult for you? Then brainstorm your options ahead of time.

Here are some ideas *[review the examples on page 5]*:

- **Plan ahead.**
- **Stay away from problem cues when you can.**
- **Change problem cues.**
- **Respond to problem cues in a more healthy way.**
- **Add helpful social cues.**

Stay positive. Think of every social event as an opportunity to learn what works well for you and what doesn't. Remember, you are building healthy habits for a lifetime.

To Do (page 8)

Turn to page 8 and let's focus on what you can do between now and the next session.

Please continue to keep track of your weight, eating, and activity minutes. Come as close as you can to your calorie, fat gram, and activity goals.

New things to practice:

Describe a social cue that's a problem for you. *[Give participants time to record the problem on page 6.]* Make a positive action plan. *[If time permits, give the participants time to complete the worksheet.]*

Think of positive social cues you would like to add. *[Give participants time to record this on page 7.]* Make a positive action plan. *[If time permits, give the participants time to complete the worksheet.]*

Try your **two action plans** for making social cues work for you. And before the next session, answer the questions for both action plans (Did it work? If not, what went wrong?). You can share your experience/feedback next week. *[Note: If it is near a holiday, vacation, or particular social event, include an action plan for that event.]*

Add at least 250 steps per day to your activity this week. *[Have participants fill in the blank.]* What can you do to walk more steps per day?

[Note: This is the standard GLB step progression. Many participants will be able to comply. However, you should make exceptions for individuals with serious health problems that limit their mobility. For them, they should start where they are and gradually increase as much as they can.]

[Announce the day, time, and place for the next session.]

After the session:

- Weigh participants who did not do so prior to the group meeting.
- Complete data forms and documentation required in your setting.
- Follow your program's protocol for managing absences.
- Review the self-monitoring records from the previous week. Write brief comments. Be positive and nonjudgmental.
 - Praise all efforts to self-monitor and to change eating and activity behaviors.
 - Highlight especially any positive changes made that relate to the session topic of the week before the records were collected: making healthy food choices when eating out, coming close to their calorie, fat gram, activity, and step goals.
 - Refer to **Guidelines for Reviewing Food and Activity Records** available in the GLB Providers Portal.