

Session 6 Leader Guide:

Take Charge of What's Around You

Objectives

In this session, the participants will:

- Learn about common food and activity cues and ways to change them to make it more likely that they will reach their lifestyle goals.
- Mentally search their homes, work places, and food shopping places, looking for problem food cues and discussing ways to change them.
- Learn ways to add positive cues for activity and limit cues for inactivity.

To Do Before the Session:

- If providing Food and Activity books; one per participant.
- Review Food and Activity records from last session; with comments.
- Prepare Session 6 handout for participant notebook.

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, you learned that your weight is, in part, the result of the balance between “calories in” from what you eat and drink and “calories out” from moving more. We talked about how the best way to “tip the balance” for weight loss is to eat and drink less and be more physically active.

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?
- What change did you make in your eating pattern this past week that you are most proud of?
- How close did you come to your calorie and fat gram goal?
- Were you able to follow your plan to reach your goal for minutes of planned activity during the week? How did it go? What did you learn? Were you able to

- make active lifestyle choices to increase spontaneous/unstructured activity and to decrease the time you spent sitting? How did it go? What did you learn?
- Did you try something new in order to “tip the balance”? How did it go? What did you learn?
 - Did you try a meal or snack from the GLB Meal Plans? If so, please share your feedback with the group.
 - Did anyone look at any of the websites for additional meal plans? If so, please share you feedback with the group.

[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.]

Session 6: Take Charge of What’s Around You (page 1)

[Do not distribute the Session 6 handout yet.]

Today we're going to talk about how to **take charge of what's around you**, or **how to make what's around you support your GLB goals** to lose weight by eating healthfully and being more active.

First, we'll talk about cues for eating, and later, go on to activity cues.

- **What "cues" you (or makes you want) to eat?** *[Optional: Write responses on the board.] Be sure to note when “hunger” is mentioned.* Of course, one reason we eat is because of **hunger** and learning how to respond to hunger cues in a healthy way is one of the goals of the program. But what about those times when you have an “appetite” or desire to eat without physically being hungry?
- You might eat because of **what you're thinking or feeling**. For example, you might eat some ice cream because you feel lonely, bored, or happy.
- You might eat because of **what other people say and do**. You might eat chips at a party because a friend offers them to you.
- Or you might eat because of **the sight or smell of food**.
- **Certain activities that make you think about food** (like watching TV or reading magazines). This is what we'll focus on today. In later meetings, we'll talk about eating in response to thoughts, feelings, or what other people say and do.

[Distribute the Session 6 handout. Review page 1 and include the following information:]

Look at the “cues” listed on page 1. How does our list compare?

When people list their food cues, hunger is often mentioned last. [*Point out where “hunger” is on the list the group generated.*] The goal is to have hunger move to the top of the list, as shown on page 1. We will help you notice and respond more to the cues that come from your body and less to those from the environment. That is what it means to “take charge of what’s around you”.

Please look at the box for some examples.

- The **sight of food** is one of the most powerful food cues. For example, you may see a carton of ice cream in the freezer and soon you'll be eating ice cream, even though you're not hungry.
- The **activity of watching TV** is also a powerful food cue for many people. You may turn on the TV and find yourself eating potato chips, even though you're not hungry.
- Another example is **eating popcorn at the movies**. Do you eat popcorn when you go to the movies?

If not, probe for another example that is relevant for the participants, such as eating hot dogs or nachos at a sporting event or buying cookies after passing a bakery. Use the example in the discussions that follow.

Why do you eat popcorn in that situation? Do you think it's because you're hungry? Most likely, it's because eating popcorn at the movies is a **habit** for you.

When you respond to a food cue in the same way over and over again, you build a habit. The food cue becomes paired with the way you respond, and your response becomes more and more automatic.

Let's say that since childhood, you've gone to the movies many, many times, and you've eaten many boxes of popcorn there. Now you find yourself eating popcorn whenever you go to the movies, even though you're not hungry. You responded to the cue (going to the movies) in the same way (buying popcorn), over and over again. Buying popcorn became a habit. And since it's a habit, it may be hard for you to sit through a movie and not have popcorn.

Food cues and eating habits are not harmful by themselves. But they can be a problem if they get in the way of your efforts to eat fewer calories. Food cues may also lead you to make unhealthy food choices or eat when you're not physically hungry.

How can you change problem food cues and habits?

1. One of the best things you can do is to **stay away from the food cue. Or keep it out of sight.** For example, you may not be willing to stop going to the movies, but you can stay away from the concession stand. If you keep going to the movies and don't let yourself have popcorn, slowly you will stop thinking about popcorn. The connection between the movies and the popcorn will have been broken.

2. Or you can **build a new, healthier habit. Practice responding to the cue in a healthier way.** An excellent way to support yourself as you do this is to **add a cue that helps you lead a healthier life.** For example, you might take a package of sugar-free gum with you when you go to the movies. When you enter the theater, take out a piece of gum. After a while, you will connect going to the movies with chewing gum.

It's important to remember that **it takes time to break an old habit or build a new one.**

Change doesn't happen overnight. If you wanted to stop eating popcorn at the movies, you would need to see a lot of movies without popcorn. Eventually, you will enjoy the movie and forget about the popcorn.

Note: Some participants may need more examples to grasp the idea that cues in the environment make them want to eat certain things, or that they can learn to manage these cues. Find some ways to show your participants that there are many food cues around all the time and that this phenomenon is so common that we are usually unaware of how powerful it is.

These ideas are powerful, and they work. Also, they're nothing new. People use them every day. Some examples:

- Food companies deliver samples of new breakfast cereals right to your door by mail. They know that if they can get the food into your house, you'll eat it and be more likely to buy it.
- Food stores put new products on the shelves that are the easiest to see and reach. They also put out samples to taste.

For generations, mothers have put leftovers in the front of the refrigerator so their children are more likely to eat them.

In this session, we want to help you learn to make changes in what's around you to encourage healthy eating and being more active.

Common Problem Food Cues (page 2)

[Note: A few common food cues are listed at the top of page 2. Do not turn to this yet.]

Let's talk about **some of the problem food cues in your life and some ways you can change them.**

Let's start with **where you live.** Imagine that we've just opened the front door. A film crew is recording what's in the room. Which room would it be? Do you see any actual food in the room? Do you see anything else that might make you think about eating, like

a TV or a comfortable chair? What is a change you could make to stay away from that cue or to build a new, healthier habit?

Move from room to room ("Are there other rooms that are a problem for you?"), asking for cues and discussing possible ways to either stay away from the cue or to build a new, healthier habit. If the participants have no response, ask them to refer to their previous Food and Activity records and/or turn page 2 of the handout to the list of common problem food cues and ask if one or two of the examples apply to them (possible solutions are given below). Use just a few examples, and make sure they are relevant to your group. Food cues will come up at future sessions and can be addressed in detail at that time.

[Review the "At home" section. Include the following information if not already discussed in your group.]

Living Room

Cue: *TV (or computer, telephone).*

Solution(s): One way to break the connection between eating and the TV is to make it a rule for yourself not to eat in front of the TV (or while on the computer or phone).

Keep an exercise bike, exercise mat, or other equipment nearby.

Keep a pack of sugar-free gum nearby. Allow yourself only calorie-free beverages, not food.

Cue: *Candy dishes (for serving candy, chips, and nuts) on an end table.*

Solution(s): Don't buy candy, chips, or nuts. If you do buy these foods, store them out of sight.

Kitchen

Cue: *High-calorie foods, especially those that are ready to eat* (in the freezer (e.g., ice cream), refrigerator (e.g., cheese, lunch meats, pie), kitchen cupboards (e.g., cookies, chips), or on counter tops (e.g., cookie jar, food packages).

Solution(s): Stop bringing these foods into your home altogether. Store them out of sight, in a brown bag or other opaque container.

Make them hard to reach. Store on highest shelf or in the basement.

Keep healthy food choices easy to reach, in sight, and ready to eat.

Examples: Fresh fruits, raw vegetables (already washed and prepared), pretzels, low-fat popcorn.

Limit high-calorie choices to those that require preparation.

Cue: *Foods you are cooking or leftovers, on the stove or counter.*

Solution(s): Make it a rule not to eat while cooking. Taste foods only once, then drink water or take a breath mint immediately.
Ask someone else to taste the food.
Rinse off any utensils used in food preparation immediately after each use.
Put leftovers away **before** meals.
Ask someone else to put the leftovers away.
Put leftovers in individual serving containers right away, and freeze them for future meals.

Dinner Table

Cue: *Serving dishes on table.*

Solution: Serve foods from the kitchen.
Store food only in the kitchen. Put packages away immediately after use.

Cue: *Large dinner plates (or large glasses, bowls, serving spoons and forks).*

Solution(s): Serve yourself small portions using a smaller plate or bowl. Or ask someone who is supportive to do so. Spread the food attractively over the plate.

Cue: *Leftovers on plates.*

Solution(s): Remove your plate from the table as soon as you're finished.
Don't eat the food that your children leave on their plates.

Let's do the same thing with when you are **away from home**. Are there any things you encounter while commuting, in public areas, or at your workplace that have become paired with eating high calorie foods? What can you do to change these problem food cues? [Review the "Away from home" section. Include the following information. Encourage group discussion.]

Cue: *Bakeries, coffee shops, food restaurants on your commute.*

Solution(s): Take a different way.
Make it a rule not to eat in the car.

Cue: *High-calorie foods in public areas (doughnuts, pastries or candy in the cafeteria or in vending machines).*

Solution(s): Stay away from those areas.
Bring a low-calorie snack to share with others.
See if there's a way to keep these foods out of sight (other people may appreciate it, too).

Cue: *Vending machines.*

Solution(s): Stay away from the vending machines.
Bring a low-calorie snack from home. Or buy juice or pretzels, if available in the machine. Ask a friend to go get them for you, so you won't be tempted by the other foods.

Cue: *High-calorie foods always in view in the workplace.*

Solution(s): Don't bring high-calorie foods to work. Keep low-calorie snacks like apples, raw carrots, pretzels, low-fat popcorn, or calorie-free beverages on hand instead.
Make it a rule not to eat at your desk.

Please turn to page 2 of your handout. At the top of the page you'll see common problem food cues we just discussed.

Please take a minute think of your problem food cue(s). Write it on the line.

Look at the "Tips" box. It lists four strategies to manage food cues to help you take charge of your eating environment. The important things to **remember**, whether you are at home or away from home are:

[Review the information in the box on page 2. Include the following information:]

- **Limit your eating to one place.** Where do you eat most of your meals at home? Limit all eating to this place. When you are hungry, go to this place to eat. This will help you to distinguish between hunger and other cues to eat.

At work, a particular table in the cafeteria or kitchen area may be a good choice. Do not eat at your desk or computer. This is an open invitation to become distracted from eating.

- **When you eat, limit other activities.** The rule is simple: No TV, driving, or talking on the phone while you are eating. Focus on enjoying the meal. In the future, these other activities will not cue you to eat.

Finally, let's take the film crew to **where you shop for food**. Walk around the store as you usually do. What do you see that's a problem for you?

The grocery store can be a "high risk" situation because of the sheer number of cues. Your shopping habits are directly linked to the foods that end up in your home (and in your stomach). But you do have some control and you can learn to become a healthier shopper. Let's look at the "Shopping Tips" that are listed at the bottom of the page.

[Review information and include the following information:]

- **Become an expert on where you shop.** Know the best places (including farmers markets) that fit your budget, routine, and healthy eating goals.
- **Plan meals and make a shopping list ahead of time.** Make it a rule not to buy anything that's not on the list.
- **Don't go shopping when you're hungry.** Have a low-calorie meal or snack first.
- **Avoid sections in the store that are tempting** to you, if possible. For example, walk down a different aisle to avoid the bakery.
- **Buying in bulk:** Some people make individual serving packets as soon as they get home. What are some ideas for portion control?
- **Ask the grocery store manager to order healthy foods** that you want to buy. You are the customer and it is their business to please you.
- **Don't be a slave to coupons.** Only use the coupons that are for healthy foods, paper products, and cleaning/laundry supplies.

Common Activity Cues (page 3)

Now let's turn to cues for **moving and sitting**. For most people, there are many things around them that lead to being inactive. For example, after dinner, you may automatically sit down in front of the TV. This is because the end of dinner and TV have been paired together many times in the past. But remember, you do have a choice. You could just as easily choose to take a 15- minute walk after dinner.

If you have been inactive, you probably have many cues around you that are associated with inactivity and few that would cue you to be active. To be active regularly, it's important to add positive activity cues to your life. Over time, the cues will become paired with being active, and you will develop new activity habits that will become more and more automatic.

1. **What are some positive activity cues that you could add to your life?** Let's pick up our imaginary film crew again, and start with **where you live**. What could you add to the living room that would prompt you to be active?

Move from **room to room**. Mention a few examples from the handout and add some that are particularly relevant to the participants.

In the living room or bedroom:

- Keep exercise shoes, bag, and equipment in sight, not in the closet.
- Keep home exercise videos handy (training apps, channels, DVDs).
- Hang an activity calendar and graph of your activity in a visible place.
- Keep a stationary bicycle or exercise mat in front of the TV. Now TV will become a cue for moving not sitting.

- Hang a photo or poster of people being active or of outdoor scenes in a visible place.
- Subscribe to a health or exercise magazine. Keep it in a visible place.
- Put a note on the TV reminding you that a half hour of TV time could be used for a walk instead.

In the kitchen:

- Post motivational photos, outdoor scenes, or reminders to be active on the refrigerator.

In the bathroom:

- Post a reminder on the mirror to be active.

In the garage:

- Keep the car in the garage. Maybe you'll choose to walk to the neighbor's house, rather than get the car out to drive short distances.
- Keep exercise shoes, bag, and equipment on the front seat of your car.
- Keep a bicycle in working condition. Store it along with a helmet in a visible place and ready to ride.

We've talked about some ideas of how to add positive cues for activity at home. What are some positive cues for activity that you could add to your work place?

Let's pick up our imaginary film crew again. *[Encourage group discussion. Examples include:]*

- Put your walking shoes in a visible place in your office.
- Put a note on your office door or computer reminding yourself to take a walk during your lunch break before eating.
- Set an alarm on your watch or other device to remind you to take a walk.
- Make a regular, daily appointment with yourself to be active. Put it in your calendar. Keep your appointments with yourself--they are as important as your other appointments.

Look at the positive cues listed on page 3. *[Review and include the following information:]*

- Set up a **regular "activity date" to be active with a friend or family member.** When she or he arrives at 7:00 for a walk, you'll probably go even if you don't feel very energetic.

What are some other ideas?

2. Manage your cues for being inactive. Another approach is to remove the cues for being inactive. *[Review and include the following information:]*

- **Limit TV watching.** Keep the TV behind closed doors in a cabinet. Or get rid of your TV. Or be active while you watch TV (for example, ride an exercise bike or

get up and move during commercials.). What are some things that you do during TV commercials in order to break up long periods of sitting?

- **Don't pile things at the bottom of the stairs that need to go upstairs.** They remind you to keep leaving more things there, rather than climbing the stairs. Take separate trips upstairs instead.

What are some other ideas?

3. **Learn to use feelings of being low on energy, sluggish, or stressed as cues for being active.** People often become inactive in response to feeling tired or stressed. Experiment with being active instead. For example, go for a walk instead of laying on the couch and watching TV. Try it this week and see how it goes. If you continue to choose to be active in response to these feelings, you will build a new habit.

In summary:

- It takes time to break old habits and build new, healthier ones, but it can be done.
- Be patient with yourself and keep experimenting with ways to take charge of what's around you.
- One of the most important steps you can take is to get rid of problem cues and add new ones that will help create an environment that will support healthy eating and being active.
- **You can make food and activity cues work FOR you, not against you. That's what it means to "take charge".**

To Do (pages 4-5)

Turn to page 4 and let's focus on what you can do between now and the next session.

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

To help you practice what you learned today, focus on ways to make food and activity cues work for you, not against you.

First, **get rid of one problem food cue** in your life. Let's make a plan for that. (*Ask the participants the questions on page 4 and have them fill in the blanks*).

Also, **add one positive cue for being more active.** (*Ask the participants the questions on and have them fill in the blanks*).

There is a section on page 5 where you can write how things went with your plan for food and activity cues. You can share your experience/give feedback on this next week.

Let's talk about your activity goal for this coming week.

- If your goal for last week was 90 minutes, your goal is to add 30 minutes for a new activity goal of **120 minutes**. *[Note: This is the standard GLB exercise progression. Many participants will be able to comply. However, flexibility is included based on health or other barriers to exercise.]*
- If you were active for less than 90 minutes last week, that's okay. Start at your current activity level and try adding 30 minutes more this week.
- If you were already doing more than 90 minutes of activity, great work. Keep it up.

[Note: 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.]

As before, make a plan to be active this week. Remember how important it is to make a plan for activity...it doesn't just happen.

[Give participants time to complete the chart on page 5.]

[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: any changes in eating and activity to help to "tip the balance", experimenting with use of all or part of meal plans, recording minutes of physical activity, being active on several days, and coming close to their calorie, fat gram, and activity goals.
 - Refer to **Guidelines for Reviewing Food and Activity Records** available in the GLB Providers Portal.