

# Week 6: Walk to Wellness

## Take Charge of What's Around You / Cues and Triggers

We often eat or drink because something triggers our desire for food. These **triggers** are called cues. **Food cues** affect how much we eat, and **Activity cues** affect how much we move. Some cues are positive and lead to a healthy behavior. Other cues are a problem and lead us to overeat or be less active.

### Food Cues

Hunger is the most obvious trigger. But there are other triggers. Seeing other people eat makes some of us want to eat too. Maybe it's the sight or smell of food or the way we feel. Or maybe it's certain activities such as watching TV or a movie.

When we respond to a food cue in the same way over and over again, we build a **habit**. When faced with the food cue, we respond without thinking. Once a habit forms, it becomes hard to break. Changing behavior requires us to take control and stay in control.

Think about it. Food cues are all around us, and often we are unaware of how strong they are. The first step to overcoming the habit of eating too much is to become aware of our food cues and activity cues. You can learn to take charge of those cues, so they cannot stand in the way of meeting your goals.

Remember it takes time to break old habits and build new, healthier ones. Change does not happen overnight.

Think about the food and activity cues in your life. Be aware of them, and use the information you learn during this session — and throughout this program — to break the cues.

### What Makes Us Eat?

For each of us, the cues that make us want to eat are different. Here is a list of some common cues:

- ✓ Hunger or stress
- ✓ What we are thinking or feeling
- ✓ What other people say and do
- ✓ Sight and smell of food
- ✓ Certain activities such as watching TV or seeing pictures of food in a magazine

Here are examples of the effect that some common cues have on us.

Cue	Makes us want to eat
We see a carton of ice cream	Ice cream
We turn on the TV	Potato chips
We go to the movies	Popcorn

When we react to a food cue in the same way, over and over again, we build a habit.

## Changing Food Cues and Habits

Food cues are not always bad. But they can be a problem if they get in the way of our efforts to eat less fat and fewer calories. Here are some ideas for dealing with negative food cues:

- Stay away from the cue.
  - ✓ Or keep it out of sight.
- Build a new, healthier habit.
  - ✓ Practice reacting to the cue in a healthier way.
  - ✓ Add a new cue that helps you lead a healthier life.
  - ✓ Remember, it takes time to break an old habit or build a new one.

## Common Problem Food Cues

At Home	At Work
<b>In the living room:</b> TV, computer, telephone, candy dishes	<b>On the way to work:</b> travelling by a bakery or fast food restaurant
<b>In the kitchen:</b> ready-to-eat foods (ice cream, cheese, cookies), food being cooked, leftovers	<b>In public areas:</b> high-fat or high-calorie foods (doughnuts, high-fat coffee creamers, candy) in vending machines
<b>In the dining room:</b> full serving dishes on the table, large dinner plates, leftovers on plates	<b>At desk:</b> unhealthy snacks brought from home

## Changing Food Cues and Habits

Remember:

- ✓ **Keep high-fat and high-calorie foods out of your house and work place.**
  - Or, if you can't keep them out altogether, keep them out of sight. Out of sight is out of mind.
- ✓ **Keep low-fat and low-calorie choices easy to reach, in sight, and ready to eat.**

For example, keep these items easily available: fresh fruits, raw vegetables (already washed and ready to eat), nonfat dips, pretzels, low-fat popcorn, and low sugar drinks

Limit your eating to one place. (For example, the kitchen table).

- ✓ **When you eat, do not do anything else.**

For example, do not eat while watching TV, reading the newspaper, or working on the computer.

Shopping Tips:

- ✓ Make a list
- ✓ Don't shop when you are hungry
- ✓ Avoid temptations (cookie aisle!)

## Activity Cues

To be active regularly, we need to add positive activity cues to our lives. Below are examples of positive and negative activity cues:

### □ Add positive activity cues to your life.

- ✓ Keep the items listed below where you can see them most of the time:
  - Exercise equipment: shoes, gym bag, mat, bike
  - Reminders and motivators: calendar of planned activities, fitness videos and magazines, photos and posters of the outdoors or people being active
- ✓ Set up a regular activity date with a friend or family member.
- ✓ Set a timer or alarm to remind you when it's time to be active.
- ✓ Reduce TV watching, or be active while you watch TV.
- ✓ Rather than pile things at the bottom of the stairs, climb the stairs each time something needs to be taken up.
- ✓ Others:

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