



## Overview

### The Power of Social Cues

Social cues are occasions that trigger us to behave in a certain way when we're around other people. For example, watching a football game with friends is a social cue for many people to eat snacks and drink beer or soda. Social cues sometimes make it hard to stay on track with healthy goals.

Our responses to social cues are usually habits we've formed over a long time. Usually those habits are hard to change. However, the information presented here will show you how to do so.

### Dealing with Social Cues

The best way to overcome social cues is to stay away from them. But staying away is not always possible. In such a case, we can try changing the cue or responding differently to it.

Not all social cues are problems, however. Some social cues will help you eat healthier and be more active.

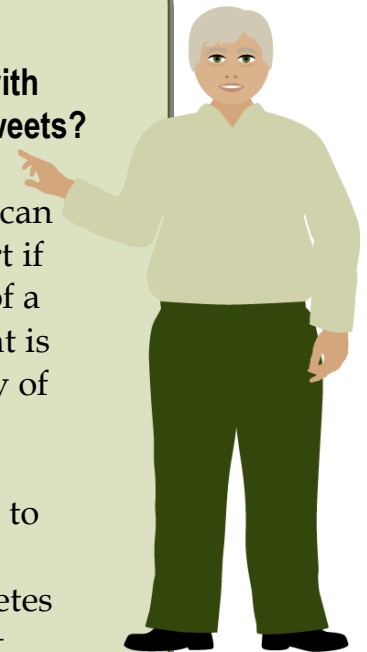


### Quick Fact

#### Is it true that people with diabetes cannot eat sweets?

People with diabetes can eat sweets and dessert if those foods are part of a healthy meal plan that is combined with plenty of physical activity.

Sugar is not off limits to people with diabetes. But people with diabetes must be careful about how much sugar they eat.



### **The Special Events Challenge**

Social cues are particularly strong at special events such as parties, holidays, or vacations. In addition, having guests in our home or being a guest in someone else's home can give us an excuse to overeat. Try to expect the difficulties that may occur, and plan ahead.

### **Staying the Course**

Remember that it takes time to break an old habit or to build a new one. Change does not happen overnight. With social cues, at least two people are involved in making a change: you and someone else.

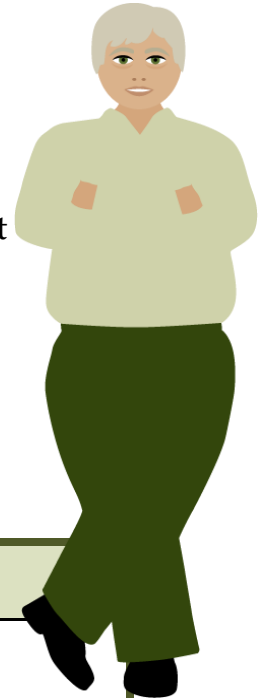
Having another person involved makes the change more difficult because we cannot expect other people to adjust instantly to our new way of thinking. Stay positive. Think of every social event as a chance to learn what works well for you and what does not.

Remember, you are building healthy habits for a lifetime.



## Examples of Social Cues

Social cues are occasions that trigger us to behave in a certain way. They involve other people, not just ourselves. When we react to a social cue in the same way over and over, we build a habit. The other person has *also* learned a habit. When two people are involved, breaking a habit is even harder than when it is just you who must adjust to change. Write in some examples of situations in your own life:



Problem social cues	Examples in your life
The sight of other people eating problem foods or being inactive.	
Being offered (or pressured to eat) problem foods.  Being invited to do something inactive such as watch a movie and eat popcorn.	
Hearing complaints, especially about eating or not eating something.	



## **Examples of Social Cues** (continued)

Not all social cues are problems, however. Below are some suggestions for what could be positive social clues for you. Write in examples of actual situations that you have experienced that were helpful:

<b>Helpful social cues</b>	<b>Examples</b>
The sight of other people eating healthy foods or being active.	
Being offered healthy foods or invited to do something active.	
Being praised.	



### Dealing With Problem Social Cues

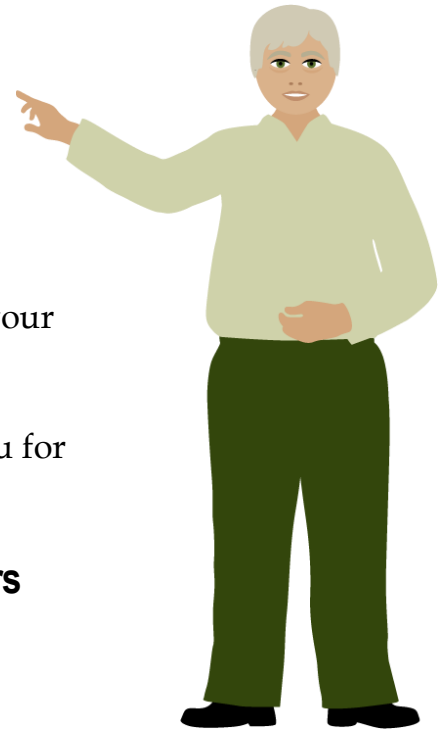
We can change social cues. Or we can change how we react to them.

**Stay away from the cue, if you can.**

- ✓ For example, move to a different room when someone is eating a tempting food.
- ✓ Spend time with people in ways that do not involve eating.

**Change the cue, if you can.**

- ✓ Discuss the problem with those involved.
- ✓ Think of other options.
- ✓ Tell the other person about the program and your efforts to lose weight and be more active.
- ✓ Ask others for support. Ask them to praise you for your efforts and to ignore your slips.



**Practice responding in healthier ways to offers of unhealthy food.**

- ✓ Say “No, thank you.”
- ✓ Respond in a gentle but firm manner.
- ✓ Suggest something they can do to help you. For example, “No, thanks. But I would love a glass of ice water or a diet soda.”



**Remember, it takes time to change habits.**



### Social Cues at Special Events

Social cues are powerful at special events such as parties or weddings. Sometimes, social events can —

- ✓ Upset our routine.
- ✓ Challenge us with unusual food and social cues.
- ✓ Involve habits that were formed over many years and so are strong.

To manage social cues at special events, try these ideas:

Options	Examples
<b>Plan ahead.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Eat something before the event, so you won't be hungry.</li><li>✓ Plan your meal in advance.</li><li>✓ Budget your fat grams ahead of time. Plan to eat the best (in small portions) and leave the rest.</li><li>✓ Bring a tasty, low-fat dish to share.</li></ul>
<b>Stay away from problem cues.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Stand as far away as you can from the table with the food.</li><li>✓ Keep your hands busy with a glass of water, coffee, tea, or diet soda.</li><li>✓ Watch the alcohol. It lowers your willpower and makes you hungry.</li><li>✓ Clear the table as soon as possible after a meal, and put the food away.</li></ul>
<b>Change problem cues.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Discuss your goals with your family, friends, guests, host, or hostess.</li><li>✓ Ask others to praise your efforts and to ignore your slips.</li></ul>
<b>Respond to problem cues in a more healthy way.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Practice a polite but firm, "No, thank you."</li><li>✓ Suggest something else they can do to help you. "No thanks, but I would love a glass of ice water or a diet soda."</li></ul>
<b>Add helpful cues.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Serve healthy foods at home. Bring healthy foods to share at other people's homes.</li><li>✓ Use low-fat products to lower the fat in favorite recipes. Try some new, low-fat recipes.</li><li>✓ Ask a friend or family member for support (split dessert with you, take a walk together, offer you healthy food choices).</li><li>✓ Plan things to do that are active and don't involve food.</li></ul>



## **Adding Helpful Social Cues**

Some social cues are helpful for staying on track. Here are a few:

- Spend time with people who are already active and make healthy food choices.
- Put yourself in places where people are active.
- Set up a regular date with others to be active.
- Ask your friends to call you to remind you to be active.
- Bring a low-fat or low-calorie dish to share when you go to a dinner party.
- Be the first to order when you eat out at a restaurant.
- Be social by doing something active. Take a walk and talk.
  
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



### Getting Support from Others

Take a minute to think about who supports your goals or who would support your goals if you asked them to. What do they do, or what could they do to help you? Write the name of a person who can help you next to the way they can help. There is also space to add other ways people can support you.

Ways Others Can Help Me Eat Healthy	People Who Can Help
Serve low-fat or low-calorie foods for meals.	
Eat low-fat or low-calorie foods when I am nearby.	
Not tempt me with problem foods as a reward or gift.	
Clear the table and put away food as soon as the meal is over.	
Help with cooking, shopping, or cleaning up after meals.	
Not offer me second helpings.	
Encourage me to cook new foods.	
Praise my efforts to eat healthier foods.	
Other:	
Other:	

Ways Others Can Help Me Be More Active	People Who Can Help
Go for a walk or do other physical activities with me.	
Plan social events around being active.	
Compromise when my being active conflicts with their schedule.	
Praise me when I do my planned activity. Do not remind me if I do not.	
Babysit for me so I can take a walk.	
Set up a regular date with me to be active.	
Encourage me to go for a walk, if I am hesitant about whether to go.	
Work to achieve and maintain the program goals with me.	
Other:	
Other:	