



## MODULE TEN

# Conquer Triggers and Cues



### How do I conquer triggers and cues?

Triggers are things in your life that you tend to react to in a certain way—without even thinking about it. They can be internal (something that happens inside a person—like a physical sensation or thought). They can also be external (something that happens outside of a person—like sights, smells, times of day, or contact with people or places). The things that you feel or see may trigger unhealthy eating or physical inactivity. When you respond to a trigger in the same way, over and over again, you build a habit. Often, these habits lead to overeating, a sedentary lifestyle, and weight gain over time.

**“The first step was changing my ‘all-you-can-eat’ mindset. I had to eliminate my love affair with food.”**

**– Joseph, lost 150 pounds**

***Remember, it takes time to break an old habit or build a new one!***

There are several ways you can change your problem triggers and habits:

1. Avoid the trigger or keep it out of sight.
2. Change how you respond to a trigger.
3. Add new cues that help you make healthier choices.

Each of these strategies will help you build new, healthier habits to replace unhealthy habits.

### **In This Module You Will:**

1. Learn how to identify your cues and triggers.
2. Identify ways of managing your environment.
3. Demonstrate ways to change cues and habits by breaking the chain.

# Progress Check-In



I met my previous healthy eating goal

I met my previous physical activity goal

*My weight today is \_\_\_\_\_ pounds.*

Reflect on how well you met your goals from the last module.

What successes did you have?

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What challenges did you encounter?

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What helped you address those challenges?

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## Even the Smallest Changes Can Make a Big Difference



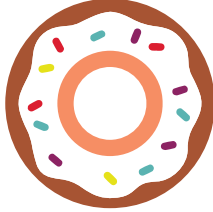
What benefits did you notice from your weight-loss efforts this past week?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better sleep       | <input type="checkbox"/> More energy        | <input type="checkbox"/> Fewer prescription medications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better check-up    | <input type="checkbox"/> Less joint pain    | <input type="checkbox"/> Better blood pressure control  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improved memory    | <input type="checkbox"/> Better mood        | <input type="checkbox"/> Better blood sugar control     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes fit better | <input type="checkbox"/> Improved cooking   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress relief      | <input type="checkbox"/> Greater confidence | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More endurance     | <input type="checkbox"/> More organized     | _____   |


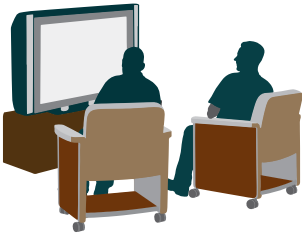

# Recognizing Triggers

The things that you feel or see, like hunger, the sight and smell of food, thoughts and feelings (see also Module 6), or other people’s comments or actions, all may serve as triggers for unhealthy eating.

Everyone deals with problem triggers and cues throughout the day. **Here are some common examples.**

		
<p><b>At the dining table</b></p>	<p><b>In the kitchen</b></p>	<p><b>At or on the way to work</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving dishes on the table</li> <li>• Large dinner plates</li> <li>• Other people eating large portions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ready-to-eat foods (ice cream, cheese, cookies, chips)</li> <li>• Leftovers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bakery on the way to work</li> <li>• High-fat, high-calorie goods readily available (in your desk, public areas, or vending machines)</li> </ul>

To be physically active, you’ll have to deal with triggers that can work against you. Here are some common examples.

		
<p><b>When commuting or traveling</b></p>	<p><b>In the home</b></p>	<p><b>At work</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long periods of sedentary time</li> <li>• Changes to your routine</li> <li>• Shoes or clothes that are not appropriate for movement or activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching TV</li> <li>• Sitting at the computer</li> <li>• Playing video games</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sitting at a computer for long hours</li> <li>• Long conference calls or meetings where you forget to stand up or move</li> <li>• Everything you need is within arm’s reach</li> </ul>

# What Are My Triggers?

Think about what triggers your unhealthy eating and inactivity. Do certain foods or situations trigger your cravings? Do certain locations or activities trigger you to be inactive? Becoming aware of your eating and activity patterns can help you better manage your weight. Write down the things in your life that have triggered unhealthy behavior in the past.



**What has triggered unhealthy grocery shopping habits?**

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**What has triggered unhealthy eating habits?**

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**What has triggered you to sit still instead of being active?**

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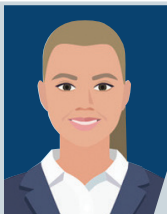
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## **Hannah's How-To Fight the Temptation**

**“Sometimes, we all need a little help dealing with temptation. Try these steps the next time you are tempted to eat in an unhealthy way.**

- 1. Take 5 slow, deep breaths to relax.**
- 2. Think of how resisting the impulse will benefit your health and help you meet your goals.**
- 3. Quickly think of something you can do instead and do it!”**

# Cravings vs. Hunger

One of the most important parts of successful weight loss is knowing why you eat. For example, do you only eat when you are hungry, or do you eat because you are bored? It’s important to know what you are responding to when you want to eat—is it hunger or is it a craving? Hunger is a healthy, natural cue that will signal when it is time to eat. Practice pausing to think about your craving before giving in to it. You may decide it isn’t worth the calories.

## Are these questions true or false for you?

<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	1. Even after a large meal, I still want dessert.
<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	2. I often have a gnawing feeling in my stomach.
<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	3. When someone mentions a food I love, I want to eat.
<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	4. I feel light headed after not eating for hours.
<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	5. When I drive by a certain restaurant, I want to eat.
<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	6. There is a time every day when I feel hungry.

Numbers 1, 3, and 5 are likely psychological cravings. Numbers 2 and 4 are physical hunger. Number 6 could be either.

It’s important to distinguish cravings from hunger. Real hunger comes on slowly, not all of a sudden. Pay attention to your body and learn your signs of true hunger. Eat 5-6 small, healthy, balanced meals to help you manage your hunger and be less likely to overeat at the next meal. Eat slowly and taste what you eat. Eat filling, high-fiber foods such as vegetables, cereals, whole grain breads, or fruit.

- Cravings often don’t last that long—you might find they pass if you wait a few minutes.
- Cravings tend to be more emotional than physical.
- Once you know your urge to eat is a craving, there are things you can do to manage it.





# Conquering Cravings

You can identify cravings by paying careful attention to when you want to eat. Consider these questions when you fill out your *Food and Activity Log* to determine whether you are eating because of hunger or a craving.

- Did something other than physical hunger urge you to eat?
- Did someone offer you food?
- Did something make you think about food?
- Did you see something that made you want to eat?
- Did you smell something that made you want to eat?



**If you are having a craving there are two ways to address it: *distraction* and *confrontation*.**

## ***Distraction***

Distraction helps you ignore the craving. When you know you are craving food, do something else. Think about something pleasant or do something to take your attention away from the urge to eat. The craving will soon pass, usually within 10 minutes. If you have many cravings throughout the day, *confronting* the craving may be a better strategy.

## ***Confrontation***

Confrontation involves facing the craving. For example, suppose you want to raid the refrigerator for ice cream. You could pretend that the craving is another person trying to convince you to eat. Argue with this person and say why you will not give in to your craving, “I just ate dinner and plan to have popcorn in a few hours. I don’t need ice cream right now, it’s just a craving.” Think about who is in control: you or the craving?

**Which approach is more appealing to you, distraction or confrontation? Describe how you will use this method the next time you have a craving.**

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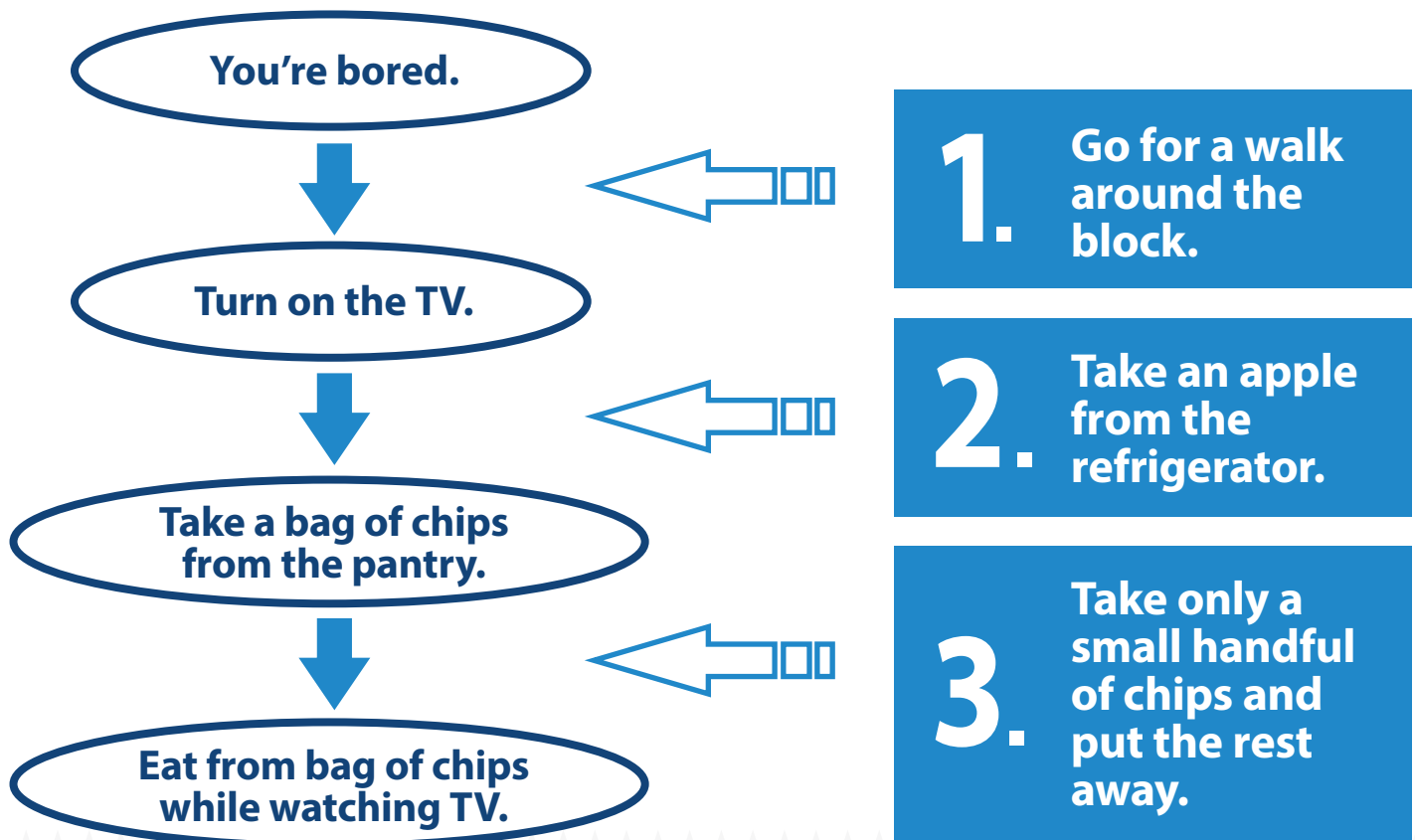
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# Healthy Ways of Responding to Triggers and Cues

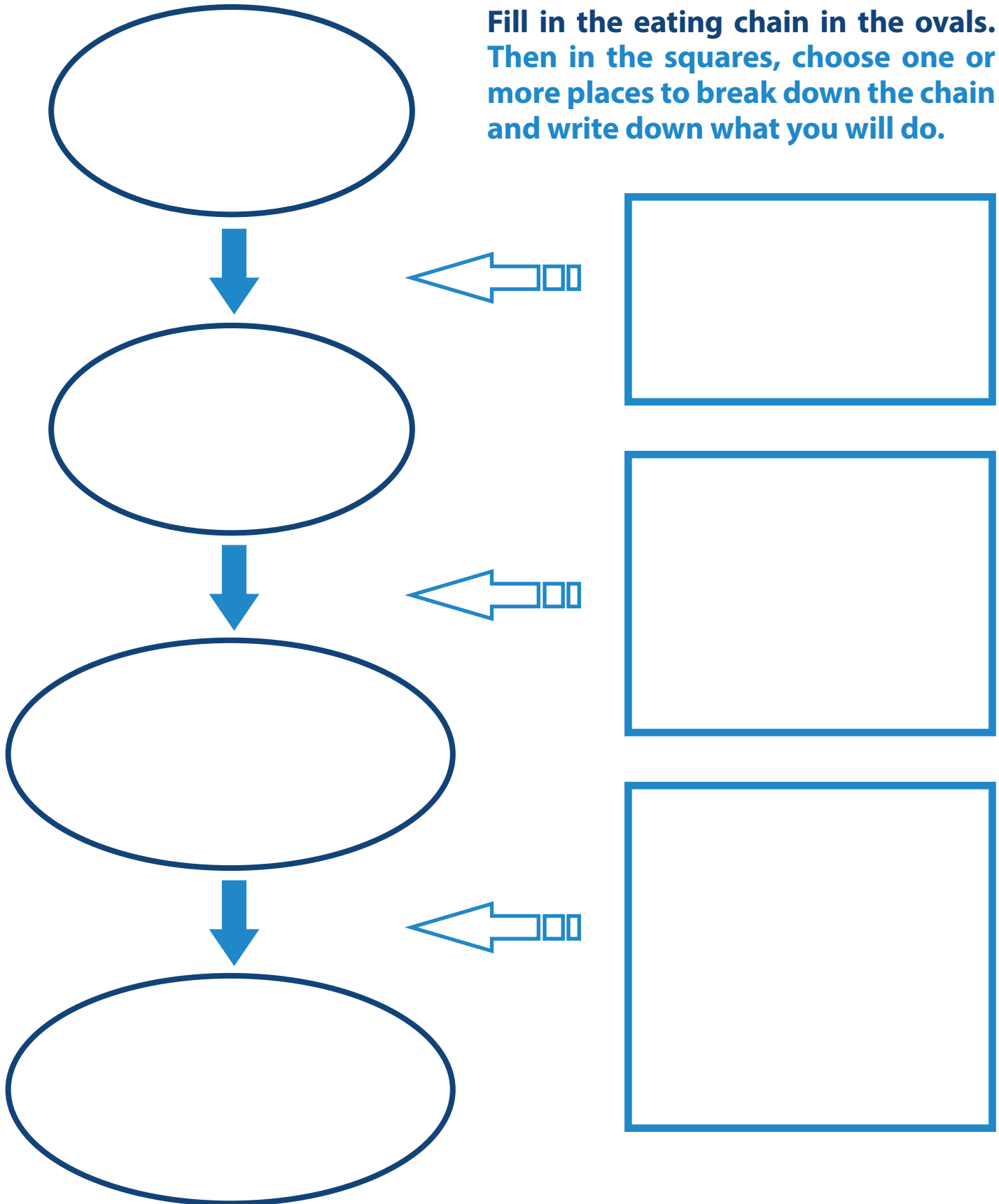
To lead a healthy lifestyle, you'll need to learn to manage triggers that can work against you. There are several ways you can change your problem triggers and habits:

Strategy	Example
1. Avoid the trigger or keep it out of sight.	Limit the amount of ice cream, cookies, or chips in your house to avoid eating these during cravings. Or limit the amount of time you watch TV.
2. Add a new cue that helps you lead a healthier life.	Leave your sneakers by the front door to remind you to go for a walk.
3. Build new, healthier habits to replace problem habits.	Keep low-fat, low-calorie foods, like fruits and veggies, on hand and ready to eat for a quick snack.

To apply these strategies, let's practice breaking the chain of events that may trigger unhealthy behaviors. View the example chain and three potential ways to break the chain. Then fill in the blank chain on the next page with a problem-eating cue/habit for you (ovals). Write down what you will do to break the chain in the rectangles.



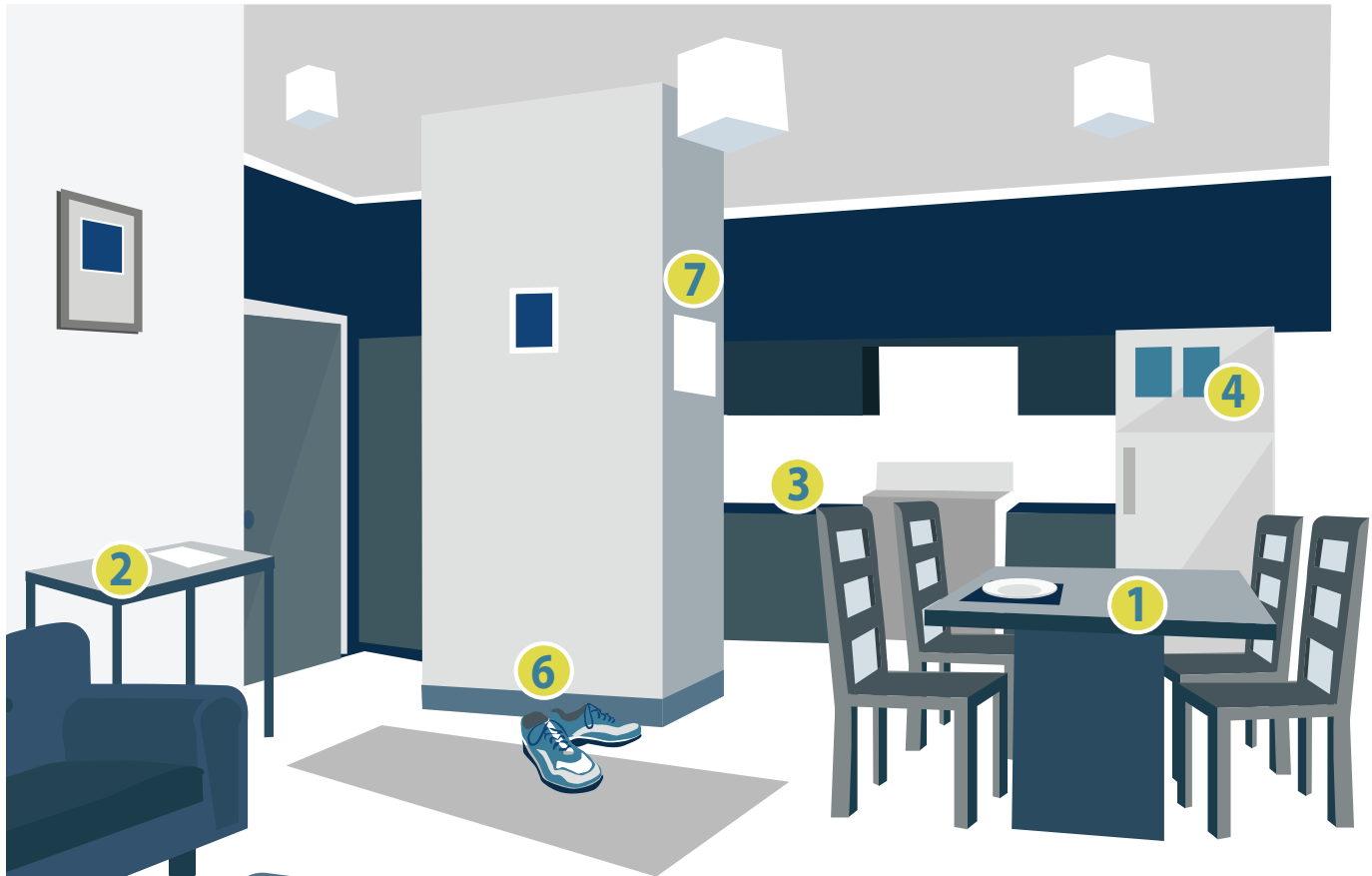
Fill in the eating chain in the ovals. Then in the squares, choose one or more places to break down the chain and write down what you will do.





# Managing Your Environment

Your environment can impact your ability to change unhealthy habits and create new healthy habits. Set yourself up for success by managing your environment at home and at work. Create an environment that will work *for* you, not against you. Post reminders about healthy behaviors where you will notice them - on the refrigerator, on the table, in your car, on the mirror, anywhere!



- 1 Eat very slowly and enjoy your meal at the table
- 2 List your reasons for managing your weight in a notebook:
  - Feel healthier, be able to do more fun stuff, feel better about myself, walk the dog longer
- 3 Keep healthy snacks ready to eat on the counter and in the refrigerator, too
- 4 Keep your Food and Activity Logs out in plain sight
- 5 Post your positive changes where they can be seen each day as positive reinforcement
  - Accomplishments to date: 1) Lost 20 pounds! (30 more to go!), 2) Blood pressure is lower, 3) Down 1 dress size
- 6 Keep your walking shoes out and easily accessible
- 7 Post your weight chart as inspiration to make healthy choices

# Planning for Successful Social Encounters

Sometimes certain people or social events can trigger unhealthy behaviors. It may be helpful to plan ahead for these kinds of situations so you know how you will respond or break the chain of events.

**Write down a healthy response to each of the following triggers using these three strategies:**

1. Avoid the trigger or keep it out of sight.
2. Change how you respond to the trigger.
3. Add a new cue that helps you lead a healthier life.

Social Triggers	How I Would Break the Chain
<b>Shopping Triggers</b>	
<i>"When we go to the movies, we always get a big bucket of popcorn and soda to share."</i>	
<i>"My family gets pizza every Friday night."</i>	
<i>"I keep cookies/candy on hand for when my grandkids visit."</i>	

Eating Triggers	
<i>"My friends and I always have wings, beer, and chips while we watch the game."</i>	
<i>"After church, my women's group has coffee and donuts."</i>	
<i>"When I go to holiday parties, birthday parties, or family gatherings I can always get sweets or my favorite comfort foods."</i>	

Triggers for being less active	
<i>"My friends and I sit together in the cafeteria every day during lunch."</i>	
<i>"When dinner is over, we all like to watch TV."</i>	
<i>"When the weather is bad, we get stuck inside."</i>	

# Busting Triggers

It can be challenging to cope with unhealthy eating and inactivity triggers. Here are some common triggers and ways to cope with them. Which of these triggers have you encountered before? How might you solve them? People who can recognize and anticipate their triggers and are ready to respond with a solution are more successful at maintaining change.



Triggers	Trigger Buster
<b>Shopping Trigger</b>	
<b>This treat is on sale/I have a coupon for it.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Find ways to save money on healthy items instead. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't clip coupons for unhealthy items.
<b>It looks tempting.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Stay away from the tempting parts of the store, such as the candy, chip or ice cream aisles. <input type="checkbox"/> Buy a very small amount. For instance, get a single ice cream bar instead of a whole container of ice cream. <input type="checkbox"/> Buy a healthier version. But take a close look at the Nutrition Facts. Don't rely on the word "healthy" alone. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep in mind that the store's goal is to get you to buy things.
<b>It's for my spouse/kids/grandkids.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Show your love in healthier ways. It will be better for you—and for them.
<i>Write Your Own.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ _____ _____

Triggers	Trigger Buster
<b>Eating Trigger</b>	
<b>I'm hungry.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Eat something healthy. <input type="checkbox"/> Stop when you feel full. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a small plate.
<b>I like to nibble on something while I watch TV.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid eating out of large containers and bags. Get yourself a single serving—and that's all. <input type="checkbox"/> Knit, ride a stationary bike, use resistance bands, or lift weights instead. <input type="checkbox"/> Chew sugar-free gum instead. Or nibble on non-starchy veggies, like celery. <input type="checkbox"/> Eat only at the kitchen/dining room table.
<b>I feel sad/ anxious/ stressed/mad.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ease your feelings in healthy ways. For instance, talk with a friend. <input type="checkbox"/> Practice relaxation.
<b>I feel bored.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Do something healthy: go for a walk, mow the lawn. <input type="checkbox"/> Learn something new to occupy your mind. <input type="checkbox"/> Read a good book.
<b>I feel lonely.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact your friends or family. <input type="checkbox"/> Meet people: take a class, join a team or club, or volunteer. <input type="checkbox"/> Think about adopting a pet.
<b>I don't want to waste food.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Cook smaller amounts. <input type="checkbox"/> Store the leftovers in the fridge or freezer or give them away. <input type="checkbox"/> Remind yourself that your health is more important than a few bites of food.

Eating Trigger	
<p><b>This looks or smells tempting.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep a supply of healthy items that you like. Make sure they are visible and ready to eat. For instance, keep cut-up veggies in your fridge and a bowl of fruit on your table.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Don't keep unhealthy items at home, or keep them out of site.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drink a glass of water or chew sugar-free gum.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid vending machines or "free" food in the office.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep healthy snacks on hand at work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I have happy memories of eating this.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Change it to make it healthier.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have a very small serving or share it with someone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make new memories of eating healthy dishes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I always get this at the drive-thru after work.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take another route so you don't pass the drive-thru.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Don't eat in your car.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Order something healthy instead.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Write Your Own.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> </ul>



**Teresa's Tips**

"Self-esteem is how you think and feel about yourself. Better self-esteem may make it easier for you to manage your weight. To improve your self-esteem, set achievable, realistic, short-term goals. Reward yourself for meeting your goals. Make a list of the positive things about yourself. Be assertive and express yourself. Instead of dwelling on your weaknesses, focus on your strengths. Be confident you will meet your goals. Imagine yourself in the future—healthier, more fit, and proud of your accomplishments."



Triggers	Trigger Buster
<b>Triggers of Sitting Still</b>	
<b>I'm tired.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Get more sleep at night. <input type="checkbox"/> Take a short nap. <input type="checkbox"/> Remind yourself that being active can be energizing.
<b>My joints/feet hurt.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Find activities that are easy on your body, like swimming or yoga. <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on what you can do. You may not be able to run but you may be able to walk. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your health care provider about managing your pain. <input type="checkbox"/> Space out activities so you don't overdo it. <input type="checkbox"/> Practice relaxation and stretching.
<b>I feel sad/ anxious/ stressed/mad.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ease your feelings in healthy ways. For instance, take a brisk walk.
<b>I always lie on the couch and watch TV after dinner.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ride a stationary bike, use resistance bands, or light weights while you watch TV. <input type="checkbox"/> Be active during ads. <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk after dinner instead.
<i>Write Your Own.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____

# Goal-Setting Check-Out

As you make your healthy eating and physical activity goals for this week, consider the following.

1. Remove one problem food trigger
  - a. What problem food trigger will I remove?
  - b. What will I need to do to make sure I remove it?
  - c. What challenges might I have? What will I do to solve them?
  
2. Add one positive cue for being more active
  - a. What activity cue will I add?
  - b. What will I need to do to make sure I add it?
  - c. What problems might I have? What will I do to solve them?

## Goals for Next Week

Set one new healthy eating and physical activity goal to work on over the next week. Remember to make it SMART (see Module 1).

### Healthy Eating:

I will \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### Physical Activity:

I will \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you had trouble meeting your goals from last week, what will you do differently this week?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Module Summary

## *Recognizing Cues and Triggers*

The things you feel or see may trigger unhealthy eating or inactivity. The things people say or do around you can also trigger unhealthy behavior. It is important to recognize the cues and triggers that may work against you when trying to manage your weight.

“If you stick with the program it works. All you need is the motivation.”

– Stephen, lost 80 pounds

## *Hunger vs. Cravings*

It is important to recognize cravings versus hunger. When you want to eat, think about whether you are hungry or experiencing a craving. There are two ways to deal with cravings: **distraction** helps you ignore the craving and **confrontation** helps you face the craving.

## *Managing Cues and Triggers*

There are three strategies to manage cues and triggers.

1. Avoid the trigger or keep it out of sight.
2. Change how you respond to the trigger.
3. Add a new cue that helps you lead a healthier life.

When you are faced with unhealthy eating or inactivity triggers, remember to “break the chain.” Ask yourself how you can interrupt this pattern of unhealthy behavior. Remember that it takes a long time to build a habit and a long time to break a habit. Setting your environment (home, office) up for success can help you replace unhealthy habits with healthier ones (for example, leaving your tennis shoes by the door for walks).

## Module To-Do:

1. Set two new weekly SMART goals in your Module Check-Out.
2. Record in your *Food and Activity Log* every day.
3. Consider how you will manage or remove unhealthy eating triggers and how you can add cues to your environment for physical activity.
4. Review Module 11 in preparation for your next meeting.