

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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Lesson 6 Diet, Exercise, and Behavior Modification (Weight Control by Mail)

Dear Weight Control Member:

Are you beginning to see some progress in your fight against overweight?

D - Diet. Are you following your diet plan? Are you eating the foods you need? Are you measuring food? How is the food cooked? Are you cutting out foods with too much fat and sugar?

E - Exercise. Are you more active? Do you exercise each day?

B - Behavior Modification. Have you begun to establish new eating habits and patterns for lifetime weight reduction/maintenance?

Last week we looked at some of the environmental factors which influence overeating and underexercising. Did you keep your record of eating habits for 7 days? You are now ready to analyze your eating habits again using "Analyze Your Eating Habits" (348-213). Please share your record and findings with me. I will return them to you later. Did you identify conditions which trigger overeating or lead to appropriate eating behavior?

The enclosed Lesson 6 is: Behavior Modification II - Changing Eating Habits.

Here we will focus on three things:

- some ways to remove environmental cues which trigger overeating
- some ways to strengthen appropriate eating behavior
- and a reward system

Assignment: Plan a reward system whereby you can "cash-in" the points earned for appropriate eating and activity behavior.

Please share your reward plan with me.

Sincerely,

Extension Agent

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1. Changing Eating Habits

Let's look at how you can change your eating habits by doing the following:

Eliminating External Cues
Suppressing Cues to Eat
Strengthening Cues for Appropriate Eating
Setting Up a Personal Reward System

During the previous lesson on behavior modification, each of you recorded and analyzed your eating habits. There are several ways one can change old eating habits and establish new ones which will assist in weight reduction and later in weight maintenance.

a. Eliminating External Cues. Eliminate external cues for inappropriate eating behavior by doing the following:

- 1) Eat in only one room.
- 2) Eat at only one place in that room.
- 3) Do not engage in any other activity while eating.
- 4) Avoid problem foods.

Avoid the purchase of problem foods by

- a) shopping from a list and
- b) shopping only after a full meal.

Avoid contact with problem foods which are in the house by

- a) allowing children or spouse to serve desserts,
- b) clearing plates directly into the garbage, and
- c) not serving high calorie side dishes at meals.

For a moment, think about how eating in one room, in one place, without engaging in any other activity can help to change inappropriate eating habits. How can you implement ways to avoid foods which you tend to overeat?

b. Suppressing Cues

A second technique used to change eating habits is to suppress cues for inappropriate eating behavior by doing the following:

- 1) Make preparation of problem foods as difficult as possible. For example, purchase high calorie foods in a form which requires extensive preparation. Prepare only enough to be consumed at one time. For example, if you are tempted to eat a slice of bread which is not part of the diet plan, it should be toasted. Only one slice should be toasted at a time, with the remainder of the loaf returned to its storage place. Sit down at the table to eat the slice of toast. If you are tempted to eat a second slice, get up from the table, take the bread out of its storage place, prepare the toast, return the bread to its storage area, return to the table, sit down, and eat the slice. This long chain of activities

achieves three purposes: (1) it increases the amount of work required to eat, (2) it interrupts a process in which "automatic" eating can occur--eating of which one may not be fully aware, (3) it creates a number of points at which one may choose not to eat.

Think of examples you have found helpful in making food preparation difficult.

- 2) Avoid eating alone whenever possible. Have company while you eat to help you suppress cues for overeating. The presence of another person has the effect of introducing social control upon eating. However, social interactions which cause or maintain inappropriate eating patterns need to be identified. Gaining the support of family members in understanding the diet plan and weight reduction program will help tremendously.
- 3) Minimize contact with excessive food. Prepare and serve measured, small quantities of food using the serving sizes on the diet plan. Make small portions of food appear to be as large as possible, either by serving food on a smaller plate or by spreading the food out on the surface of the plate. Serve foods from the kitchen counter, rather than at the table, to make measurement of food easier. Leave the table soon after finishing a meal. A great many calories can be consumed in picking at additional food while others who eat more slowly are finishing meals.
- 4) Eat slowly. The amount of food on the diet plan is limited, so the enjoyment of food should be extended. Slow down the rate of eating by following these suggestions: (1) chew each mouthful thoroughly and slowly, (2) swallow food in the mouth before adding more food, (3) eat all food with utensils, (4) plan short delays during meals such as putting eating utensils down after every three bites. Stretch out meals so they last from 20 to 30 minutes. This will give time for absorption of some nutrients causing the blood sugar level to rise and to signal a feeling of fullness to the brain.
- 5) Calculate the caloric value of food before or immediately after eating. Calculation of calories may help to control overeating. A small pocket-size notebook with the diet plan and space for recording food eaten can help to remind one of the desired eating behavior.
- 6) Avoid states of food deprivation by planning meals at regular hours and by eating every meal. For some people, excess fatigue and staying up late at night are cues for eating. Take pains to avoid fatigue due to sleep loss by developing regular sleep habits.

c. Strengthening Cues

Strengthen cues for appropriate eating behavior by doing the following:

- 1) Update daily records of foods eaten, activity performed, and weight. If possible, record the amount, the kinds, and the calorie value of food eaten as well as the amount and the kind of activity performed. Record-keeping can serve to strengthen new eating/activity habits and can assist in maintaining a weight reduction program.

- 2) Use food exchange lists to provide a reasonable variety of acceptable food choices. Determine how much of any one food you are allowed according to your diet plan.
- 3) Experiment with attractive preparation of acceptable foods. Use low calorie garnishes and spices for variation.
- 4) Keep a list of nonfood activities available at all times which will engage your interest. These nonfood activities can replace the conditioned habit of eating. These activities should be readily available and not allow eating while being done. Such activities could include hobbies that keep the hands busy. It may be helpful to do housework, to go for a walk, or to call a fellow weight watcher and check on progress at the time one is most apt to experience stress.

d. Rewards

A fourth approach to changing eating habits involves providing rewards for appropriate eating:

- 1) Have family members and/or close friends provide encouragement and praise for all constructive efforts to modify weight-relevant behavior. Some of these efforts will relate directly to weight loss, others to general attitudes about food and energy expenditures. Discuss weight reduction only with those likely to be sympathetic toward your objectives. Think of ways in which praise and encouragement from family members and/or close friends for constructive efforts to modify eating/activity behavior can affect your weight reduction program.
- 2) Set up a personal reward system. Arrange to provide yourself with some material reinforcement following successful completion of eating and exercise requirements and/or weight loss. Set up a point system whereby you give yourself a designated number of points for adhering to your caloric restriction each mealtime or each day, or for achieving your weight loss objective on a daily or weekly basis. Plan a reward system whereby you can "cash-in" the points earned by your appropriate behavior for a reward. Make the reward something special to you. Look at the worksheet on the Behavior Modification Reward System (348-214) attached to this lesson. Note the examples on it. For example, you may choose to give yourself 200 points for losing one pound. Turn the worksheet over. Your reward for losing one pound (or gaining 200 points) could be anything special to you such as buying a new outfit or treating yourself to a movie, etc.

You may prefer not to use a reward system at all. For some of you the weight loss alone may be sufficient reward. For some, deferred rewards in the form of money or time may not fit into your particular lifestyle. For some individuals a reward in the form of food may be the most appropriate method. Often, a person will crave one particular "forbidden" food. If you are allowed to have that food as a "weekend special" or as a "treat" once a week, you may be a more successful dieter. Remember that this does not allow you uncontrolled "binge" eating, nor does it allow you to continually forego nutritious food during the week in order to "cheat" on the weekend. Choose foods you want to eat as a treat from the list of extra calorie foods (sent to you with Lesson 2). Then according to the number of additional calories

you are allowed daily on your diet plans, save some of these additional calories for the weekend rather than using them up each day. You can learn to enjoy $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of ice cream, or 1 cookie, or 1 cup of popcorn. These treat foods should be planned as a part of your total diet. They should be eaten in the same controlled fashion as all other foods in the DEB diet plan.

Many people feel that once they eat one cookie or ten peanuts, etc., their diet is over. This should not be the case if treats are planned carefully. You should enjoy the food without guilt feelings because you will be back on the diet the next day. You may not lose weight the day you eat planned treats. However, your total caloric intake for the day should not cause you to gain weight. Instead, you should be able to maintain your weight. Although, realistically, this may be the most appropriate reward system for some individuals, try to recognize the dangers that are associated with regarding food as a reward. This is how many of us became overweight in the first place.

2. Summary

a. Objectives Checklist

You should now be able to:

- ___ 1. Discuss 3 things you can do to help eliminate environmental cues to eat.
- ___ 2. Discuss 3 things you can do to strengthen new, more appropriate eating behavior.

b. Activities Checklist

- ___ 1. Stick with the diet plan!
- ___ 2. Record weight on graph.
- ___ 3. Set up a personal reward system (348-214) RETURN
- ___ 4. Analyze Your Eating Habits (348-213) RETURN