

# Lifestyle Coach Facilitation Guide: Core

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work For You

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# Background and Preparation

## Preparation Checklist

### Materials

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These are the materials you will use during Session 14.

- Participant handouts for Session 14:
  - Session 14 Overview
  - Examples of Social Cues
  - Dealing with Problem Social Cues
  - Social Cues at Special Events
  - Adding Helpful Social Cues
  - Getting Support from Others
  - My Problem Social Cues
  - My Helpful Social Cues
  - My Action Plan for Special Events
  - To Do Next Week
  
- “Food and Activity Trackers” for Session 14
  
- Lifestyle Coach’s Log
  
- Name tags or tents from previous weeks, if still needed
  
- Flip chart or chalk board supplies
  
- Balance scale

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

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### Before you begin

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- Choose a private place to weigh participants.
- Prepare Session 14 handouts to distribute at the start of the session.
- If still needed, prepare name tags or set up the classroom with name tents from the previous week.
- Have your Lifestyle Coach's Log ready for weigh-ins.

### Lifestyle Coach Brief

#### Learning objectives

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At the close of this session, the participants will be able to –

- Give examples of problem social cues and helpful social cues.
- Explain how to remove problem social cues and add helpful ones.
- Describe ways of coping with vacations and social events such as parties, holidays, and visits from relatives and friends.
- Create an action plan to change a problem social cue and add a helpful one.

#### Session 14 overview

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The focus switches from ways to maintain interest in a physical activity routine to ways to stay committed to goals in the face of yet another challenge: social cues. The session builds somewhat on the discussion of food and activity cues from Session 8. Use prepared examples and examples from participants to show how to counteract the influence of social cues. To end the session, participants use what they learned to create a plan to overcome their own problem social cues.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

Session 14 is divided into four parts.

### **Part 1: Weekly Progress and Review (5 minutes)**

Weigh participants privately. Review briefly the information covered during Session 13, and then begin a discussion about participants' successes, challenges, and questions since the group last met.

### **Part 2: The Power of Social Cues (25 minutes)**

Introduce social cues and the control they can have over us. You will give examples of problem social cues and helpful social cues. Encourage participants to share their own examples. Explain that habits are formed on the basis of our responses to social cues over time.

### **Part 3: Changing Social Cues (25 minutes)**

Introduce strategies for dealing with problem social cues and encourage participants to brainstorm ways to either avoid the problem cues or to substitute them with new, healthier, helpful cues. Some of the most challenging social cues occur at special events such as holidays, parties, and vacations. Engage participants in a discussion about how to manage these situations.

### **Part 4: Wrap Up and To-Do List (5 minutes)**

## **Key messages**

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- Social cues – what other people say or do – have a powerful influence on our eating and activity.
- Changing the effect of social cues requires that we reduce problem social cues and add helpful ones.
- Our responses to social cues are often habits that formed over time. To overcome them, we must change our own habits and learn to respond differently to the habits of others, which make our responses to social cues even harder to change than our responses to other cues.

## Classroom Presentation

### Part 1: Weekly Progress and Review

Estimated time: 5 minutes

Weigh-In	Notes
<p><b>Weigh</b> participants privately, and have them record their weight on their “How Am I Doing? Weight” chart.</p> <p><b>Record</b> participants’ weight in your Lifestyle Coach’s Log.</p> <p><b>Distribute:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Session 14 handouts to insert in the Participant Notebooks.</li><li>• Session 14 “Food and Activity Trackers.”</li><li>• Session 12 “Food and Activity Trackers” with your notes.</li></ul> <p><b>Collect</b> Session 13 “Food and Activity Trackers.”</p>	
Week in Review	Notes
<p><b>Ask:</b> Did you have any trouble keeping track last week? Were you able to stay within your fat gram budget? Did you reach your goal for physical activity?</p> <p><b>Open responses.</b></p> <p><b>Offer</b> help graphing activity or weight numbers, if needed.</p> <p><b>Present:</b> Last week, we talked about ways to stay motivated as you continue working toward lifestyle goals. We looked at how to add variety to your physical activity routines to avoid boredom. We also discussed adding activities that improve your aerobic fitness. Doing both (adding variety and adding new activities) will make it easier to stay on your physical activity plan and improve your health.</p>	

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

**Ask:** How many of you worked on changing your routine to prevent boredom? What adjustments did you make?

**Discuss** preventing boredom as a group.

**Address** participants' questions or difficulties related to managing the intensity of their physical activity or making adjustments to their routines.

### This Week

### Notes

**Present:** This week we will cover –

- Social cues: what they are and how they affect us.
- Two kinds of social cues: problem cues and helpful cues.
- How to remove problem social cues and add helpful ones.
- How to cope with vacations and social events such as parties and holiday meals.
- How to create an action plan to change a problem social cue and add a helpful one.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

### Part 2: The Power of Social Cues

Estimated time: 25 minutes

#### What Are Social Cues?

#### Notes

**Present:** In an earlier session we talked about how to take charge of what is around you. We took a virtual tour through your house and your work place looking for problem food or activity cues that prompt you to think about eating or being inactive. For example, seeing a TV set might prompt you to sit instead of go for a walk, or seeing a bag of cookies on a kitchen counter might prompt you to eat when you are not hungry.

We planned some ways to remove problem cues and add positive cues (e.g., keep high-fat foods out of the house, keep your walking shoes in sight).

In that session, we focused on the sight and smell of food or certain activities that make you think about food.

Today we will talk about social cues – what other people say or do that affect our eating and activity. There are two types of social cues:

- **Problem**, or negative, social cues.
- **Helpful**, or positive, social cues.

Your goal is to replace problem social cues with helpful ones.

#### Examples of Problem Social Cues

#### Notes

**Ask:** Can anyone describe a powerful problem social cue?

**Open responses.**

**Present:** One of the most powerful problem social cues is the sight of other people eating problem foods or being inactive. For instance, going to a bar where you see other people eating potato chips and watching TV tempts many of us to do the same.



## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

**Ask:** Can you think of an example from your own experience? Is it difficult for you when you see a friend or family member eating certain foods?

**Offer** additional examples, if needed.



**Refer** participants to the “Examples of Social Cues” handout in the Participant Notebook.

**Present:** Let’s go over together some examples of **problem** and **helpful** social cues. Let’s start with problem social cues.

**Offer** examples of the problem cues below. Then have participants write their own problem social cues on the handout.

- **Being offered (or pressured to eat) problem foods or being invited to do something inactive.**

Example: Your spouse buys you candy for your birthday, or a friend asks you to come over to watch football.

- **Being nagged.**

Example: Your spouse says, “You should not be eating that bacon. It’s too high in fat.” Some people think that nagging helps, but it tends to *cause* rather than prevent the behavior the nagger wants to stop.

- **Hearing complaints.**

Example: Your daughter says, “I hate this frozen yogurt. Real ice cream is better.” Or your spouse says, “You’re always out walking. You don’t have time for your family anymore.”

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

### Examples of Helpful Social Cues

### Notes

**Present:** Now, let's go over some examples of **helpful** social cues.

**Offer** as further examples the helpful cues below, and have participants write their own helpful cues on the handout.

- **The sight of other people eating healthy foods or being active.**

Example: You go to dinner with another program participant who orders low-fat foods. You feel you should order low-fat also. You see someone go to an aerobics class, and you think "I should go too."

**Ask:** Can you think of any people who are positive influences as you work toward your goals? In what way?

- **Being offered healthy foods or being invited to do something active.**

Example: Your mother offers you fruit salad for dessert, or asks you to go for a walk.

**Ask:** Does anyone do this for you?

- **Being praised.**

Example: Your spouse says, "The oatmeal was delicious this morning, Honey."

**Ask:** Who praises you for your efforts and accomplishments?

- **Hearing compliments.**

Example: Your daughter says, "Thanks for buying frozen yogurt, Mom. It's a lot healthier than ice cream." Or your spouse says, "You're really committed to walking every day. I'm proud of you."

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

**Ask:** Does anyone compliment you on your efforts to lose weight and be more active? How does that make you feel?

**Open responses.**

### Learning Habits

### Notes

**Present:** When you respond to a social cue in the same way over and over again, you build a habit. The cue becomes paired with the way you respond, and your response becomes more and more automatic. In an earlier session, we used the example of eating popcorn whenever you go to the movies as a food cue that over time becomes a habit for many people. Social cues work the same way.

Let's say that, since childhood, your mother offers you second helpings of food at the dinner table. You developed a habit of accepting her offer. Now when you return home as an adult and your mother offers you second helpings, you find refusing is hard.

**Ask:** Do you have any childhood habits that are now hard to break?

**Present:** Understand that, with social cues, the other person also learned a habit. So, in the example we just used, your mother learned to offer you second helpings and expects that you will accept the offer. The involvement of another person makes social cues even harder to change than other cues.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

### Part 3: Changing Social Cues

Estimated time: 25 minutes

#### Dealing With Problem Cues

#### Notes

**Present:** As we discussed during the session on food and activity cues, problem social cues can be replaced with helpful cues.

**Ask:** How can you change problem social cues?

**Open responses.**



**Refer** participants to the “Dealing With Problem Social Cues” handout in the Participant Notebook.

**Present:** You can get around problem social cues by –

- Staying away from them.
- Changing the cue when possible.
- Responding differently to the cue.

Let’s take a closer look.

**Stay away from the cue.**

As with problem food cues, staying away from the cue is best. For example –

- Move to a different room when a family member eats problem foods in front of you.
- Skip parties with foods that are just too tempting.
- Socialize with people by going bowling, dancing, or to the movies. Limit eating out as a way to socialize.
- Change the subject when someone starts talking about food, weight, or cues to inactivity such as watching TV.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

### Change the cue, if you can.

Changing the cue means influencing another person's habit.

When someone nags, complains, eats problem foods in front of you, or pressures you to eat, try the following:

- Discuss the problem with the person, and brainstorm options with him or her to overcome the problem. For instance, say, "It is hard for me when you eat ice cream in front of me. Is there a way we can get together and have fun but not eat ice cream?"
- Be willing to compromise to find a solution that will work for everyone.
- Tell people about this program, your efforts to lose weight and be more active, and the reasons this program is important to you. Many people are willing to help if they understand that you want to change your eating and activity and why.
- Ask others to praise you for your efforts and ignore your slips. This step is *key* to your success. Explain to your friends and family that they can be most helpful by praising your successes and ignoring your slips. Be sure to thank them when they praise you.



#### Note to Lifestyle Coach

At this point, if appropriate, you might want to role-play with participants about how to tell friends and family about the support they need. Use meaningful examples. Using examples previously discussed is fine.

### Practice responding in healthier ways.

If you cannot stay away from or change the problem social cue, practice responding in a healthier way. Over time you will build a new, healthier habit, and the other person may learn a new habit, too.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

For example –

- Say “No, thank you” to food offers. If you are consistent and continue saying “No,” others will eventually stop offering.
- Show others you know they mean well, and suggest something they can do to help you. This practice is one of the most important. Be specific. Most people mean well when they nag, offer food, or pressure someone to eat. Many people think that being a good host means insisting that guests have second helpings. If you recognize that the host means well, ask for a specific, positive alternative. Doing so still allows the host to feel helpful, and you are more likely to reach your goals. For example, when a host offers you second helpings, say, “Thanks so much for offering. You know, what I would really enjoy is some coffee.”
- Give people specific ideas of how to help ahead of time, before you are confronted by a challenging situation.

**Ask:** What are some ways people can help you?



### Note to Lifestyle Coach

This might be another good time to role-play. Have participants practice saying “No” to food offers. Reflect on *Session 11: Talk Back to Negative Thoughts* and the role-playing work they did with talking back to negative thoughts. Use examples that are meaningful to participants. Illustrate that the participant should be prepared to say “No” several times to someone who continues to offer (e.g., “Are you sure you do not want a piece of cake?” “No, thank you. I’m sure.”)

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

**Present:** Remember that it takes time to break an old habit or build a new one. Change does not happen overnight. And with social cues, there are at least two people involved in making a change: you and someone else. Do not expect other people to adjust instantly to a new way of relating to you, any more than you expect yourself to change instantly.

### Navigating Social Event Cues

### Notes

**Present:** Social cues are especially powerful at social events such as parties, holiday meals, and dinner parties either in your home or in someone else's.



**Refer** participants to the "Social Cues at Special Events" handout in the Participant Notebook.

These events tend to –

- **Upset our routine.**  
You usually walk after dinner, so how do you fit walking in on a day when you are going to a party after dinner?
- **Challenge us with unique food and social cues.**  
Your family serves appetizers when guests are in the house but not at other times. How do you resist? You go on vacation to a place where you are not familiar with the restaurants. How do you find a restaurant with low-fat choices?
- **Involve habits that developed over many years and can be powerful.**  
For the past 30 years on Thanksgiving, your family watched Macy's parade on TV and had pumpkin pie with whipped cream for dessert. Does your family say it's not fun if everyone doesn't participate?

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

**Ask:** What are some social events that are difficult for you?



### Note to Lifestyle Coach

Get an idea of the kind of social events participants attend. If it is near a holiday or vacation, you may want to focus the remainder of the session on brainstorming options and making an action plan for that specific event.

**Present:** To handle social events, try to anticipate the problems that will occur. What exactly might be difficult for you? Then brainstorm your options ahead of time. Here are some ideas.

**Review** the examples on the handout:

- Plan ahead.
- Stay away from problem cues when you can.
- Change problem cues.
- Respond to problem cues in a more healthy way.
- Add helpful social cues.

**Present:** Stay positive. Think of every social event as an opportunity to learn what works well for you and what does not. Remember, you are building healthy habits for a lifetime.



### Note to Lifestyle Coach

You could distribute some low-fat and low-calorie ideas or recipes (e.g., recipes for low-fat dips and a list of brands of low-fat crackers).



## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

### Adding Helpful Social Cues

### Notes

**Present:** Not all social cues are problems. You can use social cues to help you eat more healthfully and be more active.



**Refer** participants to the “Adding Helpful Social Cues” handout in the Participant Notebook.

#### Examples:

- Spend time with people who are active and make healthy food choices. For instance, at parties stand next to people who spend most of their time talking and dancing instead of eating.
- Put yourself in places where people are active. One option is to join an exercise club or sports league.
- Set up a regular date with others to be active. You are more likely to stick to the plan because you will not want to disappoint others by canceling.
- Ask your friends to call you to remind you to be active.
- Bring low-fat and low-calorie food to share. One idea for potluck meals is to bring a fruit or vegetable salad.
- Be the first to order when you eat out at a restaurant, and order healthy foods. Ordering first is much easier than first listening to others order high-fat foods and then trying to order a low-fat meal. In addition, your low-fat order will be a positive social cue for other people.
- Be social by doing something active. For example, take a walk with a friend instead of going for coffee. Go dancing instead of out to dinner. Start a family tradition of taking a walk after dinner instead of watching TV. An important way to change negative social cues and add positive ones is to ask for help from people who want to support you.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

### Support From Others

### Notes

**Ask:** Are there people in your life who want to support you or who are already supporting you?

**Open responses.**

**Ask:** What could they do, or what are they doing to help you?



**Refer** participants to “Getting Support From Others” in the Participant Notebook.

**Present:** This handout has some ideas. Are any of these helpful? Fill in the blanks in the handout by writing the names of the people who can help you and the ways in which each can help you. At the bottom of each table, you can also add other positive cues that would help you.



#### Note to Lifestyle Coach

If needed, add other ideas of your own to help participants. Some participants may want to copy the handout to give to a supportive friend or family member.

### Action Plans

### Notes

**Present:** Before we close, let’s work on putting together an action plan for eliminating problem social cues and creating helpful social cues.



**Refer** participants to the “My Problem Social Cues,” “My Helpful Social Cues,” and “My Action Plan for Special Events” handouts in the Participant Notebook.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You



**Go over** the handouts with participants and have them —

- Create a plan to change a problem social cue.
- Create another plan to add a helpful social cue.
- Create yet another plan for an upcoming holiday or a social event they will attend soon.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

### Part 4: Wrap Up and To-Do List

Estimated time: 5 minutes

#### To Do Next Week

#### Notes

**Present:** For next week, keep track of your weight, eating, and activity, as usual. In addition, using the action plans created just now, work on changing a problem social cue and adding a helpful social cue.



**Refer** participants to the “To Do Next Week” handout in the Participant Notebook.

**Present:** During the week, put these plans into practice, and record on your handout what the plans were, how they went, and what you could have done differently in each case.

#### Closing

#### Notes

**Summarize** the key points:

- Social cues are powerful and can be difficult to change because other people are often involved.
- Problem cues are those that can cause us to lose focus on our weight and activity goals.
- Your goal is to replace problem social cues with helpful ones.
- For difficult social situations, try to anticipate the problems and plan ahead.
- Breaking an old habit or building a new one takes time. Change does not happen overnight. We must not expect other people to adjust instantly to a new way of relating to us.

## Session 14: Make Social Cues Work for You

**Close:** From this point on, pay attention to social cues and their effect on your life. These cues are powerful and take effort and time to change. Do not give up! Stay positive. Removing problem cues creates opportunities for adding helpful ones that could enhance your life.

**Ask** participants whether they have any questions before closing the session.

**Make** announcements about time or location changes, contact information, or other relevant issues.

### **After the session:**

- Write notes in the participants' "Food and Activity Trackers" from Session 13. Comment on participants' successes and, when necessary, recommend changes.
- Write the physical activity minutes recorded in the participants' "Food and Activity Trackers" in the Lifestyle Coach's Log.
- Use the Notes and Homework page at the end of this guide to write notes about the session.

