

Lesson #6: Desensitization

Step-by-Step Desensitization to Danger Foods:

Encounter with danger foods

The great advantage of the Modified Fast (PSMF) and Nutrifast is one of cue control. That is, these programs completely eliminate your danger foods. Yet, someday you will have to learn to deal with them. Any diet on which there are forbidden foods has one major drawback: a lack of practice in coping with these difficult foods (we have labeled them danger foods for the sake of identifying them in the following discussion).

We wish to emphasize at this point that the PSMF is not a diet – it is a fast that has been modified to spare the loss of lean tissue. Nevertheless, when you are learning to eat all over again you may be fearful of eating these danger foods and may be thoroughly convinced that you cannot handle them. True, there may be foods that pose such overwhelming difficulty to you that you may wish to eliminate them forever.

Conversely, as you begin to tackle and overcome some less difficult problem foods with the techniques we are about to describe, you will gain an increasing sense of accomplishment and self-confidence.

We remind you of the phrase: *Success builds upon success.* Thus, at a later time, you may feel ready to grapple with the “toughies”. That’s fine, there is nothing wrong with that. **Lifestyle changes are made in small steps.** You always start with the easier problems and work up to the harder ones.

Negative results of abstinence

During the PSMF there are two behaviors that can have a negative impact on your subsequent return to normal eating. One is if you *never* cheat, the other is if you *do* cheat by eating a danger food.

If you absolutely lack contact with a forbidden food for the entire duration of PSMF, it will sometimes take on exaggerated proportions in your thinking. This is an unhealthy attitude, often expressed by statements such as: “I am just dying for one bite of a peanut butter sandwich.” “I just can’t wait to eat a hard roll again.” “If I could only have a bite of a candy bar, I would be in heaven.”

This great build-up assumes such gigantic proportions that when refeeding begins and limited portions of long-awaited foods are finally permitted, the result is one massive let-down. Most individuals simply cannot take just a little bit of heaven! The all-or-none commitment (while I’m on the fast I’ll stick to it, but when I have

reached normal size, I can enjoy all these marvelous foods again) is suddenly changed to one of self-control – everything in moderation. The jolt is

Contents:

Module 1: Elimination	2
Module 2: Imaginary exposure	3
Module 3: Visual exposure . . .	4
Module 4: Less accessibility of food	5
Part 2	6
Module 5: Eating substitute foods	6
Module 6: Oral competition (no food)	6
Module 7: Alternate Activity Strategy	7
Module 8: “Safe conditions” exposure	7
Module 9: Limited exposure (time)	8
Module 10: Head-on collision course	9

simply too much to handle. That’s why there is a need for a modular technique – taking it in small steps. You can begin, even during PSMF as we will describe.

The second possibility is that you do cheat by eating a forbidden food during PSMF. This also has a negative mental consequence. It results in a feeling of transgression and a lack of self-control. Since this feeling is specifically linked with the danger food, an unreasonable fear of failure becomes associated with every subsequent exposure. Negative

Clinical Nutrition Center

7555 E. Hampden Ave., Suite 301, Denver, CO 80231
303-750-9454

Ethan Lazarus, MD • www.ClinicalNutritionCenter.com

feelings of inadequacy can be counterbalanced by practicing the step-wise modular technique we are about to depict for you and which you should use when encountering your own particular kind of danger foods.

The secret is a step-wise approach

There is a basic attitude you must adopt first: **You are capable of coping** with your eating problem if you will divide your problem into small, manageable units and come to realize that there are alternatives to destructive eating behavior. This cannot be accomplished in a haphazard manner, but must be done in an organized, progressive fashion. You must set limited goals (ones that are relatively easy to achieve) and base your strategy on a series of little successes that multiply. Take one task at a time. Do not progress to the next rung on the ladder until you have a firm footing on the one below it.

The plan we have outlined for you consists of 10 progressive steps of increasing difficulty. By starting at the easiest level (module 1) and working your way up gradually to the hardest one (module 10), you will learn to cope even with danger foods that may, at first, appear to be resistant to change. You will be able to turn a statement such as: “Ice cream is my downfall” to one which says: *“I can learn to handle ice cream as part of my healthy eating.”*

When you are learning to eat all over again, you may be fearful of eating “danger foods” and may be thoroughly convinced that you cannot handle them.

Module 1: Complete elimination

Avoidance is always the best technique, if possible; nevertheless, you must someday learn to handle such food exposures. Even then, the avoidance technique is still the easiest one to use with foods that you feel you are not yet ready to handle (*danger foods*). Thus, it is the one you should start with when you begin the learning process of

coping with these foods. With a few exceptions, this coping level is only temporary and you should begin to progress to subsequent, more difficult steps to desensitize yourself to the particular food to which you will invariably be exposed in the future.

The technique of “fat-proofing” your house is of great importance. Do not forget that it is imperative, especially in regards to your danger foods. An overly complacent attitude (“this is no longer necessary”) has been the downfall of many when they start the weight maintenance part of the program. You must assert yourself to the other persons living in your household and advise them that certain foods will have to be kept out of the house. After you have progressed to some of the more difficult coping modules, you will be ready to bring these foods into the house, but only under very controlled circumstances.

When you sneak foods, you need help

For the sake of clarification, we will use a prototype danger food for illustrative purposes, and will take it, in steps, up through the 10 steps to show how you can learn to cope at each level. Suppose one of your danger foods is [chocolate-covered peanut cookies \(CCPC\)](#). You may vow never to eat CCPC – as long as you live. If you really feel that you can eliminate CCPC from the rest of your life, you have our fullest encouragement and support. On the other hand, if you are like most people, your best of intentions will be frustrated sooner or later when your food program seemingly becomes more and more dull because of the lack of CCPC.

Tempting thoughts of CCPC will begin to pop into your mind. Not only will you begin to dream about CCPC at night, but you will begin to dream about them during the day. Eventually, you will begin to think about CCPC during a major portion of your waking activities and the craving will reach such proportions that you decide: “I just have to have some.” That is, you will begin to rationalize why you simply cannot endure this deprivation any longer (“I had a hard day today, and I deserve it for a reward.” “I must serve this for my guests, because they just love CCPC.” “I can’t deprive my children of this food just because I can’t have any.” “I’ll just taste a little bit.” – etc.). Unfortunately, the result of your indulgence will only generate more guilt and a very uncomfortable feeling of being defeated by your foe (CCPC). Failure begets more failure (just as success begets more success), and you will probably go on an eating spree of CCPC. This event will only reinforce your feeling of low self-

esteem and be followed by further vows of: “I’ll never eat CCPC again!” – and the same scenario will be repeated before very long. Does that sound familiar to you?

The reason for these repeated failures in your feeble attempts to control your eating behavior is, of course, that you did not have an organized plan of attack. *That is the whole purpose of teaching you the modular technique – it’s to give you a scientific method (step-wise) to overcome your enemy.* Saying: “I’ll never do it again,” rarely succeeds because it is a negative approach. The modular technique is a positive one.

Module 2: Imaginary exposure

After you have successfully avoided your danger food for a period of time and feel prepared to implement your plan of attack for systematically desensitizing yourself to your danger food (as sooner or later you must do), you will be ready for the next step – module 2. Here you will apply mental programming techniques such as giving yourself “Dos” rather than “Don’ts” on a daily basis. Practice positive “self-talk.” Next, select your favorite visualization of a relaxing scene (e.g., seashore or mountain scene, Swiss chalet, etc.) You are going to use that visualization to desensitize yourself to the “cravings” stimulated by danger foods. We will illustrate the method with our example of the chocolate-covered peanut cookie (CCPC).

First, you must analyze what characteristics of the danger food appeal to you the most. Let’s say you have decided that it is the chocolate flavor, the peanut flavor

and the crumbliness of the cookie that you like the most. As you analyze your feelings about this food cue, you may also realize that you like anything with a chocolate flavor and that you relish the taste of peanut butter. Thus, you might split your visualization into two separate segments: one for a chocolate cookie and the other for a peanut butter sandwich. The procedure should be carried out in these steps:

Step 1: Find a comfortable spot and achieve a deeply relaxed state.

Step 2: Visualize your pleasant scene, the one that you have picked for this exercise. Get it clearly in your mind. Try to actually feel yourself be present in that scene. While you are doing so, let yourself relax even more. That should be easy to do as you contemplate the relaxed atmosphere in your mind’s eye.

Step 3: Now, switch scenes. See yourself eating a peanut butter sandwich. Conjure up the flavor, texture, odor, etc., that you like so much. Make it as vivid as possible. Really enjoy your mind trip. Stay with it as long as it is enjoyable. You might find that you can enjoy this food in your mind’s eye as much as you do in reality. That’s fine – it’s completely calorie free (and there is no FDA to tell you it can cause cancer in rats). Should you, however, feel yourself getting even only slightly tense because you develop a craving or a guilt feeling (from a past memory), immediately switch scenes (easy to do instantly in your mind) back to your pleasant one. Such a switch will relieve any anxiety that might have built up. Dwell on your pleasant scene until



you feel completely relaxed again and all the tension is gone. Now switch back to the peanut butter sandwich and reproduce the visualization. Repeat this procedure several times, always switching to the pleasant scene if you feel any discomfort at all while mentally eating the peanut butter sandwich. After a while, you will note that you can enjoy the peanut butter sandwich scene to its fullest without experiencing any tension at all. Often this will alleviate any craving you might have had prior to this relaxation and mental programming session.

Step 4: Now do the same thing with a piece of chocolate. Eat it sensuously – using all your senses to get the most pleasure out of the chocolate. Again, always switch to the pleasant scene if you feel yourself getting anxious. Repeat several times as with the peanut butter sandwich.

Step 5: Now you are ready to visualize yourself eating the CCPC, getting both the flavor of the chocolate and peanut in the cookie. Switch to the pleasant scene if indicated, as previously. As you continue to practice this, you will find less and less need to switch. You can now enjoy your danger food as often as you like, in your mind’s eye.

A major portion of the pleasure of the eating experience is a mental one. You are now learning to enjoy that part without the fattening effect of actually ingesting the food. But more important, you are desensitizing yourself to the emotional tension induced whenever you are exposed to these danger foods. We wish to stress, however, that you must practice this technique at least once daily. A one shot effort is not enough. Repetition is the key to desensitization. If you are really serious about your weight problem, you will spend the necessary time for this procedure. This is definitely one of the “DO’s” of your weight control program. You cannot remain passive if you want to be successful.

After you can comfortably eat your danger food during your “mind trip” (usually 2 to 3 weeks), you will be ready for the next step.

Module 3: Visual exposure

This one is just a little bit harder, but if you preceded it with module 1, it would be more difficult than the feelings you experienced when first starting your mental exposure. In this coping module you will learn to expose yourself to pictures of your danger food. The actual technique is really a very simple one – in fact, it’s so simple that you might belittle its effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is an absolute necessary step in your progression to the more difficult modules. We will use our example of the CCPC again.

Get as many attractive looking photographs as possible of your danger food, in this example, peanut butter, chocolate, cookies and (if possible) of chocolate-

covered peanut cookies. They should preferably be in color, as realistic and inviting as possible. A Polaroid or digital camera is excellent for getting pictures of exactly what you want. One word of caution, however: Be sure that the picture-taking sessions are done under very tight controls. Take your photos when you are calm, content and not hungry, and preferably with another person present (e.g., your Program Monitor). Have him or her discard the food immediately after the pictures have been taken. Furthermore, the foods should not sit around the house prior to the photography session. Bring them into the house just before you take the pictures. It might even be better to have someone else bring the foods, or even take the photographs. At this stage, you are not ready to expose yourself fully, without planning for all the safeguards.

You are now all set to practice the second coping module. Position yourself in an undisturbed environment as you did in module 1. This time, instead of mentally imaging the foods, you are going to look at pictures or models of them. Proceed exactly as you did before mentally. You can still use your imagination by conjuring up what these foods would taste like if they were in your mouth. Study the pictures intently as you think about the desirable qualities of these foods. When you get uncomfortable, close your eyes, relax, and mentally travel to your pleasant scene. When you no longer feel any anxiety, open your eyes and look at the pictures. The moment you feel the least bit of discomfort, go back into the relaxed state and your mental pleasant scene. Repeat several times. After a while, you will find that looking at pictures and/or

smelling the CCPC no longer bothers you. You will have achieved a significant grade in your advancement towards desensitization to CCPC. Practice daily, until the result is always the same: It no longer bothers you at this level of exposure. You are now prepared to tackle the next module, a slightly more onerous one.

Module 4: Less accessibility of food

This module represents the next rung of the ladder on your way up in learning to cope with your most difficult foods. This is probably also the most decisive step because you are going to bring them into the house, albeit in small quantities. The main idea is to place as many obstacles as possible between you and the danger food. The more barriers you set up, the greater the likelihood of your ability to resist the temptation caused by the presence of your danger foods. The following are some definite concrete steps you can take (they are all “DOs” not “don’ts”) to help you achieve this goal:

- Buy only smaller portions of your danger food. Smaller unit packages may cost more per ounce, but you will save money in the long run (aside from expenses for losing weight that you will gain from eating them to excess). If you buy a larger bag of cookies, you are more likely to finish them off once the bag has already been opened. If you have to open several small bags to eat the same number contained in a larger bag, you have to make a choice each time you open a new bag to eat more. It will automatically make you stop and think!

- Separate the amounts you buy into smaller portions, wrapping each separate portion with some type of opaque material (aluminum foil is excellent for that purpose). Clear plastic is not desirable because it allows you to see the food, although you might be ready for that as a next step. Keep foods in tightly covered containers (preferably sealed with some kind of tape – masking tape works well for this).

The above are methods of *portion* and *visibility* control. The following are methods of location control. They may be used by themselves or in addition to the above.

- Store your danger foods behind the first row of the refrigerator, near the back of the shelf. You won't see them each time you open the refrigerator door and you will have to move another food out of the way to get at them.

- Store non-refrigerator items on shelves in your cupboard that are so high up, you have to get a stool to reach them. Put the stool in another part of the house. It will take more time to get them down (delay tactic) and as an extra bonus you'll get a little exercise by having to take more steps to complete your task.

- The freezer is a good place to store many items after they have been portion-controlled. Bread and muffins, for instance, can be kept frozen except for one or two slices. They'll keep longer that way too. If you want more, you'll have to wait until it thaws out. Similar techniques can be applied when you are away from home. Just remember the basic principle: **Make it hard to reach**. You can enlist the aid of another person to help you with this.

- When you are in a restaurant, have someone else order for you. If it's a buffet style meal ask a friend to fill your plate for you (if he too is overweight, you can do the same for him). By filling each other's plates it is more likely that you'll both end up with more reasonable portions.

- At a party or when visiting at a friend's home, place yourself as far away from the snacks as you can get. Turn your back to where the food is displayed if you cannot locate yourself in another room of the house. When you do serve yourself, get only one piece at a time. Go back each time for another one. You'll have to excuse yourself from the conversation you may be engaged in at the moment.

All these are obstacles of one sort or another. Once you have begun to think in this manner, many ideas will present themselves to you as you go about your daily activities. Remember, any method that makes your danger food hard to get will be useful in this phase of learning to cope with the way these foods exert an influence on you.

Module 5: Eating substitute foods

The principle behind this coping technique is to compete with your danger food by keeping your mouth busy while you eat a safe and allowed food (one that will not cause you to go over your caloric allowance for the day). When you place yourself in a situation where you will be tempted by a danger food, be sure to plan also for the availability of attractive correct food that appeals to your sense of taste. This may require some pre-planning on your part (See *Keeping It Off Lesson #7: Pre-Planning*).

When going to the movies, you might bring an apple or an orange to satisfy your desire for snacking whenever you get the call to wander over to the candy concession. True, eating while watching a movie is not ordinarily proper behavior (you are linking eating with another unrelated activity – that is generally an inappropriate behavior). You want, eventually, to extinguish the movie food cue (i.e., whenever you watch a movie it generates a desire to nibble on something), but the substitute food will serve as a good temporary measure in your climb up the coping ladder.

If you're invited for dinner at a friend's home where your favorite danger food is invariably served, bring the hostess a special low calorie dessert (or other substitute food if it is something besides dessert that you have trouble with). It might just be the hit of the evening. We have had many such reports from patients who were innovative enough to prepare such an item and bring it with them.

If your dining partner gives you a choice of restaurants to go to, pick one that has a good selection of permitted foods that you can use as substitute for the danger foods. If he or she does not give you a choice, this is a good time to practice assertiveness (not aggressiveness) techniques (See *Keeping It Off Lesson #10: It's Your Right to be Thin*). You may be surprised that he or she is easier to get along with than you thought, if you conduct yourself properly in this situation. If you've always gone to the same restaurant out of habit, this is a good way to start breaking with precedent and begin your journey to a new lifestyle.

If you are the host in your own home, the problem is much more easily solved. Ask yourself, "*What danger food can I serve that everyone will enjoy and for which I can prepare a substitute food for myself?*"

We wish to clarify an important feature at this point. You could have coped with the dinner at the friend's home by calling ahead and arranging not to have any danger foods present. When you picked a restaurant, you could have chosen one that has none of your danger foods on the menu. There is nothing wrong with these techniques (they are avoidance methods and belong in module 1). On the other hand, the coping level of module 5 is more advanced than this basic avoidance technique. We want to emphasize that you must learn to progress to more difficult danger food exposures. Otherwise, you will never be able to achieve complete control when you are fully exposed to a danger food. The

Just remember the basic principle: Make it hard to reach.

whole purpose of the modular technique is to give you a plan of training yourself to eventually be able to successfully cope at the highest level, namely, head-on.

It is better when you have progressed this far to expose yourself to the danger food but have a competing food available as a weapon to fight your battle with. When, and only when, you have worked your way up to module 5, you should bring danger foods into your house, but have a plentiful supply of safe foods for your everyday at-home eating. It will allow you to choose from several options which will compete with your eating the problem food. This is a training period, and you decidedly must expose yourself under these relatively controlled conditions. It will teach you to tune in to your specific needs at the moment and show you that you can satisfy them with appropriate foods. The confidence generated by this maneuver is an invaluable aid in your battle to gain control over dangerous food situations. Being successful at this level will allow you to progress to more difficult ones with the self-assurance and conviction that you are no longer a victim to your fork, but its master.

Module 6: Oral competition (no food)

This module is identical to the previous one in that you expose yourself to your danger food while you keep your mouth busy with other objects that compete with your ingestion of danger foods. It differs from

module 5 because you will keep your mouth occupied without the aid and use of another food item. You should not advance to this stage until you have successfully completed module 5 and coped with your danger food by eating something else. In module 6 you can either put something else in your mouth that satisfies you when you get the urge to eat the wrong thing, or you can use your mouth for an activity that is incompatible with the act of eating.

The first category might include chewing on a stick of gum or keeping any non-edible material such as a straw or toothpick in your mouth. Sipping on a glass of water while preparing dinner is another example of this technique.

The second category of incompatible mouth activities might also include conversation. You can't talk and eat at the same time (unless you're a ventriloquist), but exercise care that you don't become a listener who gobbles down the food while another person is talking. We have one patient who successfully solved her dinner preparation problem by playing a CD and engaging in a sing-a-long with the music. There was no one else in the house, and it was a very effective method for her. If you can't sing consider whistling. Make the resolution not to interrupt your vocal activities until the food preparation is completed.

Module 7: Alternate Activity Strategy

A slightly more difficult module than using your mouth for competing activities (other than eating) is to manipulate your exposure to a

danger food by substituting an **alternate activity (AA)** in lieu of eating, one that involves a totally unrelated endeavor. The non-eating response should ideally be one that is incompatible with eating your problem food. Something that keeps your hands busy is often quite useful. Knitting, crocheting, working with certain crafts, playing a musical instrument, washing your car or painting all tend to keep your two hands occupied, making them unsuitable for the act of putting finger foods into your mouth.

These activities should also be readily available so that they can be utilized the instant you get the craving to attack your favorite danger food. They should also compete with your urge to eat. They could either be something pleasant (e.g., recreational or hobby) or something that needs to be done (e.g., cleaning out a closet, taking the dog for a walk). Don't forget the value of exercise, which is undoubtedly the best alternate activity. It allows you, literally, to kill two birds with one stone: not only do you substitute for calories taken in, but you burn a few in the process.

The secret for prospering from module 7 is to implement these instructions by making a list of alternate activities beforehand – literally, think them through – spend some time figuring out what might work best for *you* (we are all different).

Module 8: "Safe conditions" exposure

Sooner or later you must begin to face your danger food. Once you have reached this coping level, your initial face-to-

face exposure to your danger food should be under very controlled and "safe" conditions. First, you will have to analyze your eating records. Ask yourself: *Under what circumstances do I tend to eat appropriately? What protective stimuli need to be present to allow me a greater degree of self-control? In what situations have I behaved correctly in the past? What attendant events are the most dangerous for me? Which occasions seem safest for me?*

The answers to all these questions must come from your food records, not from guesswork. They represent factual material about your eating behavior. These records will also supply the details you need to identify the environmental influences that either lead you to or prevented you from mis-eating.

Suppose that in studying your food intake notes, you have discovered that you only mis-eat when you are alone, but never in front of other people – especially in front of your significant other (he or she becomes very upset when you overeat). Armed with this important bit of information, you plan (*very important word*) to set up your first pre-meditated eating of CCPC while he or she is present (better tell your dining partner what you intend to do and why, just so there is no misunderstanding on his or her part as to your underlying purpose). Your strategy calls for eating two CCPC (gourmet style) next Friday, before dinner (your diaries have indicated before dinner is a safer period for you than after), while you discuss the day's activities. You plan to sit in a specific chair in the living room, with your significant other sitting opposite to you across the coffee table. You also plan to have some hot tea for yourself to sip on while

he or she has a glass of wine. You are also going to use one of the new gold-rimmed china plates to put your two CCPC on, and will use one of the red and white napkins (ordinarily reserved for guests) with a picture of Snoopy on them (remember, be nice to yourself; you deserve just as much pampering as your guests do).

Moreover, you are going to place your favorite recording on the stereo to serve as soft background music. For lighting, the room will be lit only by the 100-watt bulb of your table lamp.

There's method to this madness

(a pre-planning aid)

You might wonder: *Why all this detail?* A good question. The more detail you include in your pre-planning the better. Leave nothing to chance. Paying close attention to minute particulars will also help you considerably in your next step of mental programming.

Between pre-planning and the actual event is an essential step that must never be omitted. Just knowing what to do, does not imply the ability to do it! Your past dietary attempts should tell you that. How many times have you been fully aware of exactly what you must do, but found yourself just incapable of doing it? Our guess is, many times! That's because you left out mental programming. Here is how you can do it:

It is now Monday, and the event is planned for Friday. You've got five days to program. If you think you need more time, then schedule the event a week or two from

Friday. There is no rush. Remember, you are going to confront a very formidable and insidious enemy, namely CCPC! If you need more time for preparation, then by all means take it. Time is on your side. You didn't develop your addiction to CCPC overnight. It probably represents a lifetime of habitual mis-eating.

For your visualization, start with your trip to the market. See yourself buying the smallest bag of CCPC available. See yourself arriving home (at a safe time of day – see module 9 for details). You open the bag and wrap the cookies, two each, in aluminum foil (see module 4), put them away in a safe place (module 4). Now you are ready to begin your mind trip of the actual planned eating episode. Visualize, in your mind's eye, your significant other coming home. You serve him his drink, unwrap a package of two CCPC, put them on the special plate, sit down in the special chair, etc. Visualize the scene in as much detail as possible. Mentally, transpose yourself into the scene. Try, actually to be there! The more realistic you make all the sensations the better. With practice, you can develop the powers of your imagination. Some persons have a built-in, vivid imagination. Others have to work a little harder to achieve the necessary intensity of the experience. Nonetheless, with practice, everyone can attain a sufficiently high degree of perception to be of practical value for this purpose. Repetition, at least a daily session, is the secret of learning the skills of mental programming.

When the designated Friday arrives, mentally it will be as though you had already done it. The experiences will merely be a

carrying out in actuality what you had already done in your mind previously. You will be surprised how easy it will go, but only if you have followed all of the above preparatory steps.

Module 9: Limited exposure (time)

This step is an expansion of the previous one. In this module you also expose yourself directly to your danger food, but the only control is one of time. By studying your daily food notes you may realize that most of your inappropriate eating is done at certain times of the day, or certain days of the week. Perhaps, certain times of the month (e.g., pre-menstrual in some females) or certain seasons of the year (e.g., Christmas) are associated with less control in coping with your danger foods. Again, look at the data – don't guess. Let the record speak for itself. That's the whole purpose of keeping records – to use them – in a constructive manner, to help you gain control over your eating behavior.

Many persons overeat only after coming home from work, only after 6 p.m. or only on weekends. For them, a safe time might be at 8 a.m. on weekdays. Learning to handle danger foods might best be practiced at that time of day. To illustrate, let's return to our example of the chocolate-covered peanut cookies (CCPC).

Let's tackle it when you're alone

Let's say you have been successful with the planned event we described in module 8. You might wish to repeat that exercise a few more

times before proceeding to the next step. Several successful attempts of eating CCPC in the presence of another person will do marvelous things to your self-esteem. Success builds upon success! With all that behind you, you feel ready to tackle eating CCPC in solitude, without the protective influence of your dining partner. That's fine. Let's do it, but let's not remove all the controls yet. Let's make the time factor our only remaining control. Your diaries have revealed that when you are alone you better not attempt to eat CCPC after 6 p.m., on weekends, when you are hungry or upset, when you are tired or angry, or during the holiday seasons. Therefore, those are not the times to plan your controlled eating episode. After considerable contemplation and reflection, you decide that you will have two CCPC (again, gourmet style) on a Wednesday morning at 9 a.m. You plan it for three weeks away because you need that much time for programming, (this is a toughie for you, eating alone has always been a big problem).

Next, pre-plan all the minute details, just as you did for the event in module 8. Follow this by daily mental programming, again as vividly as possible, leaving no details out. With meticulous preparation, your chances of success are greatly in your favor. So, do it, and see what happens. If you are triumphant, the victory will serve to give you the self-confidence for the next and final step. If you fail, don't feel guilty (not unless you did not follow the careful planning we outlined for you) – after all, you don't know unless you try first (scientifically, in small steps as described). It simply means you were not yet ready for this module, and you should back-

up to module 8. Stay with that for a while, and try module 9 again at a later time. Eventually, you will succeed, and it will be well worth the effort!

Module 10: Head-on collision course

This is the highest rung on your coping ladder. Here you are able to deal with the temptation of your danger food directly, without any safeguards. This level is akin to an athlete in training who has reached his optimum fitness. He has reached his peak, the ultimate victory (of course, fitness must be maintained, or it is very quickly lost). Similarly, when you have successfully completed this level, you too will have attained your crowning consummate triumph. The whole purpose of starting on the lower rungs of the ladder has been to reach this final module. This means that you will be able to come face to face with CCPC any time, any place. You will be able to decide either to eat or not to eat them – or eat only a limited quantity. If you do decide to eat them, you will be able to stop eating them any time you decide to do so. You will have complete freedom. You can take it or leave it! You will be in full control of your eating behavior – that is, in regards to that specific danger food.

You can now apply the same modular technique to other foods. Success with one of them makes success with others more likely. We suggest you don't start with the most difficult danger food. Start with the easiest one – one in which success is more likely. This principle of small-step behavioral change applies to everything we

teach you. Not only does it apply to your eating habits, but also to your exercise and activity habits (there is no such thing as instant fitness).

It's your ball game!

Reaching and completing module 10 is the best result you can expect. It will happen often enough to make the effort of working up to it as we have described in this publication very worthwhile. We know from experience with many patients that it does work, if you are willing to become an active participant in the modular technique. We cannot take the steps for you. Only you can do that. If you really want to get in control of your eating behavior, if you are really serious about wanting to solve your problem (verbal assurances are not enough; actions speak louder than words), then you too can be successful. In conclusion, we repeat our motto that sums up your commitment in a few words: You can suffer and endure, or work hard and succeed!

It's your ball game from here on out.

© Copyright 2006
Clinical Nutrition Center

© Copyright 2002, American
Society of Bariatric
Physicians. Adapted from
materials from the Lindner
Manuals.