

# KEEPING IT OFF!

## Lesson #3: Cue Control

### Continued from Lesson #2

This lesson will build on the ideas presented in Lesson Two dealing with changes in your physical and social environments to aid you in weight control.

### 1. Eliminating conditioned eating cues

According to the learning theory presented to you in the introduction to this course, it is necessary to make sure that eating is not paired with more than one physical location in your house, or with any other activity, so that other places and activities do not become signals for you to eat. Imagine, for example, that you like to watch television while eating. The television will soon take on the properties of a “conditioned stimulus” - that is it will become a signal to eat. This means that even though you have just finished a big meal and you are not hungry, sitting in front of the television will result in a tremendous urge to nibble on something. This urge is automatic and usually an unconscious one. The relationships between various external food cues (and internal ones as we shall see later) and the urge to eat must be weakened if you are to remain comfortable at home and not fight incessant urges to eat. Therefore, try to eat all of your meals in the same room, sitting in the same chair.

The same reasoning is true in defining *when* you eat. We are creatures of habit and tend to do things in repetitive cycles. The passage of time alone or a specific time can easily become a “conditioned stimulus” or cue to eat. For these reasons, try to eat your meals at the same time every day, both because of the psychological pairing of eating with the time of day and because of the physiological expectancy of food that your body develops. For example, you do not want 10:00 P.M. to be a signal to eat simply because sometimes you have had late-night snacks. You actually adjust to a rhythm of food-intake if you adhere to a regular schedule and will find that you are appropriately hungry at mealtime and less hungry in between.

### 2. Feeling full or satisfied

Lesson Two discussed the fact that it takes approximately 20 minutes for most individual’s hunger to subside. With this in mind, it is obvious that making your meal last at least 20 minutes helps you feel full at the end of the meal. If you finish eating in just 10 minutes, chances are you will want to eat more. If this is the case, try eating more slowly to stretch out the length of time spent eating your meal. To help slow down your eating, make sure to take small bites and chew each mouthful thoroughly. Place your fork on your plate in between bites and do not re-load it

until you have swallowed what was in your mouth. Make this way of eating a habit. If necessary, leave in the middle of your meal and return later to make

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up the 20 minutes. At first, it will take a lot of concentration, but eventually it can become your natural eating style. Do not allow a busy schedule to interfere with the time required for good eating habits. If you are to succeed both now and in the future, this regimen must be a high priority item for you. Time taken to eat, to fill out the required forms, and to practice the lessons will be time well-spent.

### 3. Avoidance

The reasoning behind the previous lesson’s instructions to rearrange your home, remove food cues from all parts of the house except for the kitchen, and eliminate any need to enter the kitchen except for mealtime, teach that avoidance is a cornerstone of successful weight control. Carrying the concept of avoidance one step further means avoiding the opportunity to eat more than you should during your meal. Serve yourself only the amount of food that you are allowed. Don’t place a serving platter on the table and expect yourself to eat only the amount that is right for you. Rather, do the measuring and

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serving before you sit down to eat, knowing that what is in front of you is to last for at least 20 minutes. Keeping food out of sight helps to keep it out of mind.

After dinner, the only thing you should be in the habit of having is water. Any other liquid or food paves the way for returning to the late-night snack syndrome. To avoid harmful food-cues at night, prepare a pitcher of water after dinner and take it with you to the room in which you plan to be the majority of the evening. Drink all the water you want until bedtime. Try not to enter the kitchen after dinner.

#### 4. Pre-planning

Planning ahead, or *pre-planning* was discussed in the *Introduction to Behavior Modification* with regard to having an ample supply of “permitted” food in your house, so that you will never have a need to eat inappropriate items. A second element of pre-planning involves those times you do not eat in your own home. Always have something such as a small can of water-packed tuna fish (either “pop-tops, or remember a can opener) with you (in your pocketbook, in your car, or in your briefcase) to use as a last resort in problem situations.

If you accept an invitation to eat at a friend’s or relative’s house, discuss the menu beforehand. People will usually be willing to accommodate your requests, but if they cannot, you will be able to eat your own food and not feel guilty.

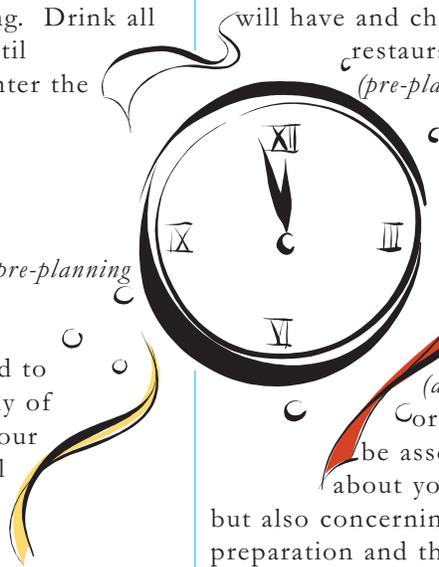
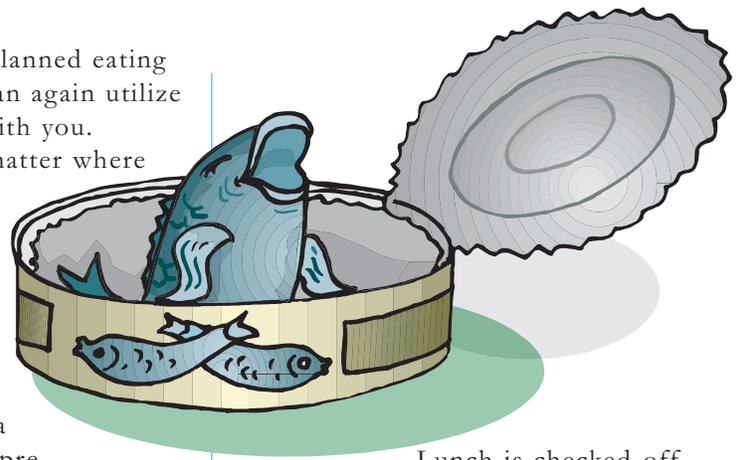
During those emergency situations when you simply cannot

adhere to your pre-planned eating arrangements, you can again utilize the food you have with you. Remember that no matter where you eat, try to eat sitting down and stretch your mealtime to approximately 20 minutes.

When you eat in a restaurant, combine pre-planning with avoidance. Decide beforehand what kind of meal you will have and choose the restaurant accordingly (*pre-planning*). When you are there, do not even open the menu and tempt yourself by reading about foods you have not planned on (*avoidance*). When ordering your meal, be assertive not only about your food choices, but also concerning their preparation and the manner in which they are served. Most restaurants will try to be accommodating. You will get to know which restaurants are best for you; however, if you find dining out to be a difficult or trying experience, you may wish to avoid it when possible and look for social outlets which do not revolve around food.

#### 5. Eating Place Record

**B**egin filling out an *Eating Place Record* with this lesson, which will take four weeks to complete. Beginning with breakfast, put a check under the heading which best describes the place in which you have eaten.



Lunch is checked-off under the appropriate heading and is in the same row as breakfast. Do the same for your dinner meal. You may have three checks in the same box under the kitchen heading or you may have checks under three different headings. The same is done for each day of the week for a full four weeks.

Because of the associations between the desire to eat and the places in which you allow yourself to eat, your goal is ideally to eat in only one designated place (preferably your dining room or kitchen). You do not want to associate eating with being in your car, den, living room, or bedroom. Nor is it desirable for you to associate eating and working. Try to avoid eating at your office desk or working in the kitchen. If you find yourself checking off undesired categories, try to do something about it! Where you eat is under your conscious control. This record should help you see how well you are adhering to your desired behaviors. Eating in a proper place can and should become a habit for you.

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## WEEK THREE CHECKLIST

- When I eat lunch out, I bring my food with me, in case there is nothing there for me to eat.
- When eating out, I allow twenty minutes for the meal, and I eat sitting down.
- I am keeping accurate *Eating Place Records*.
- I am filling out *Hunger Sensation Records*, if and when I am hungry.

### My Daily Eating Habits at home include:

- I always eat in the same room.
- I always eat sitting down.
- I put the food on the utensil down on the plate between bites.
- I chew each mouthful of food thoroughly before preparing the next bite.
- I spend twenty minutes on each meal.
- I serve myself only the amount of food that I am allowed.
- I put leftover food directly into the garbage.
- After dinner, I prepare a pitcher of water and take it with me to the room in which I plan to be most during the evening.
- I do not enter the kitchen after dinner.

Explanations and/or comments  
for categories not checked:

# Eating Place Record

Starting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

----- OUT OF HOUSE -----

HOME\*

WEEK	DAY	Restaurant	Party	Car	Other	Kitchen	Living room	TV Room	Bedroom	Dining room	Other
1	1										
	2										
	3										
	4										
	5										
	6										
	7										
2	1										
	2										
	3										
	4										
	5										
	6										
	7										
3	1										
	2										
	3										
	4										
	5										
	6										
	7										
4	1										
	2										
	3										
	4										
	5										
	6										
	7										

Check square which best describes where your meal was eaten

**\*Circle check marks which indicate designated eating place**