

HOW can social influences be challenging?

Social situations can be high-risk, and without proper planning, can derail your efforts to make healthy lifestyle choices. And its not just situations, challenging social relationships can also get you off track.

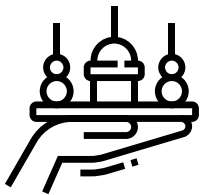
Social Events may:

- Upset our routines
- Challenge us with unique food and social situations
- Involve habits that have developed over many years, making them very powerful

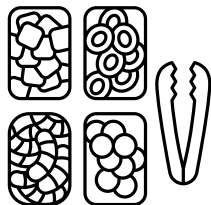


WHAT are social cues?

Social cues are reminders in our environment that can influence our behavior. Examples of social cues that could make social events difficult include:



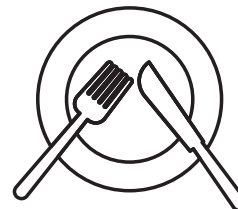
Being offered foods by friends and family



Availability of a variety of novel foods



Limited availability of nutrient dense choices



Distracted eating, leading to eating more



Drinking alcohol or sugary drinks before or during eating

HOW can I make social cues work for me?

When you respond to social cues the same way over time, you build habits. Others in your life have also learned habits based on past responses. This makes social cues even harder to change than other cues.

But with practice, you can form new habits. Here are a few pointers to help make social signals work for you:

Check out your assumptions

Some cues exist because of what we assume others want us to do. Instead, ask what others really think and feel.

Add helpful cues

- Serve healthy foods or bring some to share.
- Ask a friend or family member for support (split a chosen snack food with you, take a walk together, offer you healthy food choices).

Plan ahead

- Eat something before the event.
- Plan your meal in advance to include nutrient-dense foods.
- Plan to eat the best (in small portions) and leave the rest.
- Bring a tasty, nutritious dish to share.

Get back to basics the next day

If a social event gets the best of you, start fresh by getting back to your regular routine.

Change unhelpful cues

- Discuss your goals with your family, friends, guests, host/hostess.
- Ask others to praise your efforts and ignore your slips.
- Stand as far away as you can from the table with the food.
- Keep your hands busy with a glass of water.

Respond to unhelpful signals in a healthier way

Practice assertiveness with a polite, but firm, "No, thank you."

HOW can social influences help us?

Social support has been linked to:



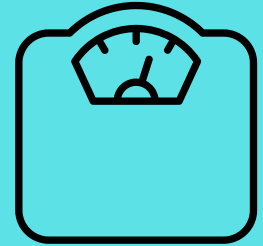
Longer lifespans



Delayed
disease
progression



Better long
term behavior
change



Better weight
management

Researchers have proposed **three** main ways in which other people can provide support:



Informational support is providing someone with the information he/she needs to solve a problem.



Practical support involves giving useful resources to an individual to satisfy his/her needs.



Emotional support encompasses the ways in which you let others know that you care about them.

Knowing the type of support you need is critical! If you're feeling upset and want a sympathetic ear (emotional support), it probably won't be helpful for someone to tell you about the importance of physical activity (informational support). Once you know what you need, asking for support is the next step.

WHAT is assertive communication?

Communicating assertively means clearly and calmly expressing what you want without being either too passive or too aggressive.

Learning to communicate assertively can make it more likely you will have your needs met and can improve your relationships with others.

Passive

- Gives in
- Ignores or avoids
- Hides true feelings
- Does not talk, so not heard

Assertive

- Compromises
- Respects self and others
- Firmly sets boundaries
- Talks and listens

Aggressive

- Takes
- Demands
- Talks over others
- Bullies others

HOW do I communicate assertively?

1. Let the person know you understand his/her position. Be descriptive and as clear as possible:

Example: "I know you really want me to take home a slice of the cake you made."

2. Let the person know your position and what the conflict is. Don't be afraid to assert your position

Example: "But I am working on reducing my sugar intake."

3. Tell the person what you want or what you plan to do. Be confident and when appropriate, stay open to negotiation.

Set yourself up for **SUCCESS**



Reflect on your experiences with social cues that influence your behaviors, how these social cues may impact your eating and activity patterns, and how you respond to them.

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Brainstorm strategies for recognizing and managing social cues to support your wellness goals, such as practicing mindfulness during meals and assertive communication.

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Think about the three types of social support. Practice asking for the support you need, and offering it to others as well.

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Remember, to approach these actions with kindness and flexibility, knowing that progress takes time and effort!