



Module 11: Managing Behavior Cues

Lifestyle Coach Guide



Module Overview

Behavior cues can be sights, smells, sounds, feelings, people, places, activities, or situations that prompt a certain response, often without conscious thought. Identifying and changing behaviors associated with these cues can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. This module shows participants how to change unhealthy patterns associated with behavior cues into healthy habits.

Participant Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Explain what a cue is and how they can create and re-create patterns associated with getting groceries, eating, and inactivity
- Identify common cues for getting groceries, eating, and inactivity and ways to change unhealthy patterns associated with them
- Identify their own cue that lead to overeating or less healthy choices
- Describe how emotions and cues lead to food choices and eating patterns

Things to Do

In addition to the Session Checklist, you will also want to do the following:

Before this session:

- Communicate with your participants via email, text message, app, or social media to prepare and motivate them for this upcoming session on managing behavior cues. Here are some sample messages you can send to participants for this module:
 - 1 Week Prior: “During our next session, we’ll talk about cues that lead to overeating or less healthy choices. For example, do certain situations, moods, or times of day prompt you to overeat or spend more time sitting still? We will be discussing ways to help you turn these patterns into healthier ones. Don’t miss this important session!”
 - 1 to 2 Days Prior: “Our next session on managing behavior cues is almost here! We will be identifying cues and brainstorming ways to build new, healthier patterns. Looking forward to diving into this important topic!”
- If applicable, set up the appropriate number of virtual breakout rooms in your web conferencing tool so that there will be three to four participants per group for the “Common Behavior Cues” group activity.

After this session:

- Communicate with your participants via email, text message, app, or social media to continue the conversation on behavior cues. Here are some examples of messages to post:
 - “What strategies have you tried for some of the common cues we discussed during our last session? Are they working for you?”
 - “What patterns have you successfully changed since our last session on managing behavior cues?”

Session Content

The following content is designed to last for 60 minutes. Please allow about 10 extra minutes to receive weigh-in information and to consult with participants privately, if needed, at the start of each session.

Welcome and Review	Page 3	5 Min
Session Focus	Page 4	1 Min
About Behavior Cues	Page 5	14 Min
Common Cues	Page 9	20 Min
My Cues	Page 15	5 Min
Emotions and Cues Lead to Choices	Page 17	5 Min
Plan for Success	Page 19	5 Min
Summary and Closing	Page 20	5 Min

Welcome and Review



Time Estimate: 5 minutes
Method: Facilitated Discussion

SAY:

Welcome back, everyone! This is the [current session number] meeting of [name of program].

Today, we are going to talk about behavior cues.

Before we start, let's spend a few minutes going over what we discussed last time. I will try to answer any questions you may have.

DO:

Briefly summarize the previous session.

DISCUSS:

What questions do you have for me about what we talked about last time?

SAY:

Let's talk about how things went with the action plan you made last time.

DISCUSS:

What went well? What didn't go well?

SAY:

Now let's talk about how it went with the other things you tried at home.

DISCUSS:

What went well? What didn't go well?



Time Estimate: 1 minute
Method: Presentation

SAY:

Please look at “Session Focus” on page 1 in the Participant Guide.



For a virtual session, use the screen share feature to display “Session Focus” from the Participant Guide for all participants to view.

SAY:

Identifying and changing behaviors associated with cues can help you stick with your healthy routine. Behavior cues are things in your life like sights, smells, sounds, feelings, people, places, activities, or situations that you react to in a certain way—without even thinking about it.

Today, we will talk about:

- Explain what a behavior cue is and how they can create and re-create patterns associated with getting groceries, eating, and inactivity
- Identify common cues for getting groceries, eating, and inactivity and ways to change unhealthy patterns associated with them
- Your own cues that lead to overeating or less healthy choices
- How emotions and cues lead to your food choices and eating patterns

Finally, you will make a new action plan.



Time Estimate: 14 minutes
Methods: Presentation, Facilitated Discussion

This part of the session provides participants with an understanding of what a behavior cue is and how cues form patterns. Use Martha's story to discuss the importance of identifying and changing unhealthy patterns related to these cues.

Martha's Story—Part 1 (14 minutes)

ASK:

What do you think we mean when we talk about behavior cues?

ANSWER:

A behavior cue is an event that kicks off an urge to do something. Cues can be sights, smells, sounds, or feelings that you react to in a certain way, without even thinking about it. They can also be people, places, activities, or situations. For example, hearing the mail truck (cue) causes you to go to your mailbox to get the mail (action).

SAY:

Over time, it becomes easier to form a habit where we find ourselves repeating the same action after the same cue. When behavior cues lead to making less healthy choices, they keep us from reaching new eating and physical activity goals.

In this program, we'll look at our current patterns and cues, think about how they developed over time, and build new patterns that support our health goals. That may mean doing something new—avoiding your afternoon visit to the snack machine, skipping the treats in the grocery checkout lane, or doing some exercise while you talk on the phone. At first, that new action will seem strange, but, as you do it more, you will start to build a new pattern. Soon, turning on your TV may make you reach for your exercise band without even thinking about it. You have built a new habit!

Let's look at an example. Please look at "Martha's Story—Part 1" on page 2 in the Participant Guide.



For a virtual session, use the screen share feature to display “Martha’s Story—Part 1” from the Participant Guide for all participants to view.

DO:

Read (or ask a volunteer to read) Martha’s story.

SAY:

Again, this is what Martha does almost every workday.

ASK:

What are some of the things in Martha’s life that cue her to make specific choices?

ANSWER:

- Being sleepy cues Martha to have coffee. This, in turn, leads her to eat a pastry or treat.
- Martha’s need to unwind at the end of the day cues her to eat chips and drink soda. It also cues her to lie on the couch instead of being active.
- Seeing a vending machine cues Martha to want to eat a snack, even if she might not be very hungry.

SAY:

Now, let’s talk about some of the patterns that Martha has created in her day. Please look at the table under Martha’s story.

ASK:

What are the patterns that Martha wants to keep? What’s positive?

ANSWER:

- Having a cup of coffee to wake up
- Having time to herself before she starts the day
- Leaving her desk to take a break
- Going for a walk to the lounge
- Talking to her friend Adam
- Getting a snack
- Relaxing
- Enjoying time with her partner
- Laughing with her partner
- Getting up during the show

ASK:

What are the less healthy patterns that Martha can start to change?

ANSWER:

- Eating a highly processed pastry in the morning (300 calories)
- Eating a highly processed pastry in the afternoon (300 calories)
- Eating highly processed snacks and drinks in the evening (500 calories)
- Falling asleep in front of the TV

SAY:

Understanding our behavior cues and the choices associated with them gives us the ability to change them. Of course, you'll need to form new patterns consciously at first before it becomes more routine.

Before we read the rest of Martha's story look at the table under her story. In the far-right column, take a minute to think about some ways Martha can change her less healthy patterns. Record your thoughts in the right-hand column.

DO:

Give participants a few minutes to record their ideas in the table.

DISCUSS:

What are some ideas that you came up with that Martha might do to make changes to her less healthy patterns?



For a virtual session, encourage participants to type their ideas in the chat window in the web conferencing tool.

SAY:

Please look at “Martha’s Story-Part 2” on page 4 of the Participant Guide.



For a virtual session, use the screen share feature to display “Martha’s Story—Part 2” from the Participant Guide for all participants to view.

DO:

Read (or ask a volunteer to read) the rest of Martha’s story.

ASK:

What new patterns does Martha form?

ANSWER:

- Martha still eats something with her coffee but chooses a healthier option: quick oats with a teaspoon of maple syrup, some fresh blueberries, and a few walnuts.
- Martha takes a 10-minute walk at work with her friend Adam.
- When Martha gets hungry at work she chooses a healthier snack – such as cut up veggies and dip, a small piece of fruit or cheese and crackers – instead of going to the vending machine.
- Martha exercises with her partner before watching TV.
- When Martha gets hungry in the evening, she chooses a healthier snack: 3 cups of popcorn and herbal tea with honey.

SAY:

In Martha’s story, she is making lots of changes. Remember, figure out what works for you and be realistic. You may identify just one cue you want to change. Then, when a new pattern is formed, work on the next one!



Time Estimate: 20 minutes
Methods: Presentation, Facilitated Discussion, Group Activity

This part of the session covers common cues related to getting groceries, eating, and inactivity. Participants will identify other associated cues and ways to form new behaviors.

Getting Groceries, Eating, and Inactivity Cues (5 minutes)

SAY:

There are some common cues that we all face related to grocery shopping, eating, and inactivity. Please look at “Getting Groceries, Eating and Inactivity Cues” on page 5 in the Participant Guide.



For a virtual session, use the screen share feature to display “Getting Groceries, Eating, and Inactivity Cues” from the Participant Guide for all participants to view.

DISCUSS:

Which of these cues are familiar to you? How so?



Changing Behaviors for Getting Groceries, Eating, and Inactivity Cues (15 minutes)

SAY:

Now, you will be participating in a group exercise to identify additional cues associated with grocery shopping, eating, and inactivity, and then brainstorming ideas for ways to form new behaviors for each cue. Please look at “Changing Behaviors for Getting Groceries, Eating and Inactivity” on page 6 in the Participant Guide.



For a virtual session, use the screen share features to display “Changing Behaviors for Getting Groceries, Eating and Inactivity Cues” from the Participant Guide for all participants to view.

SAY:

A list of grocery shopping, eating, and inactivity cues appears in the left-hand column. Work with your group to identify other cues associated with these topics. Record this in the left column where it says “Add Your Own.” Then, brainstorm ideas for ways to form new behaviors for each cue. Record your ideas in the “Ways To Form New Behaviors” column. Remember to include any ideas or strategies that you’ve learned from our previous sessions that would work here.



If dividing participants into small groups is not possible for a virtual session, have participants conduct the activity by themselves.

DO:

Share group assignments and begin small group meetings. Give participants an exact time to meet back as a whole group.

Join one or more group sessions to facilitate the discussions.

When participants return, briefly discuss their new ideas.

DISCUSS:

What additional grocery shopping cues did your group identify?

What ideas did your group come up with for forming new behaviors for these grocery shopping cues?



For a virtual session, encourage participants to type their ideas in the chat window in the web conferencing tool.

DO:

Share the following (if not mentioned by participants):

- **It's on sale, or I have a coupon for it.**
 - Find ways to save money on healthy items instead.
 - Don't clip coupons for unhealthy items.
- **It looks tempting.**
 - Stay away from the tempting parts of the store, such as the candy, chip, and snack food aisles.
 - Buy a very small amount. For example, get a single ice cream bar instead of a whole container of ice cream, and choose one with fewer calories.
 - Buy a healthier version. But take a close look at the Nutrition Facts. Don't rely on the word "healthy" alone.
 - Keep in mind that the store's goal is to get you to buy things. Come up with a strategy for the checkout line or the "buy one, get one free" specials on foods you are limiting.
 - Unsubscribe from store email lists that send tempting buys via email.
- **I always buy this.**
 - Shop with a list and stick to it.
 - Remind yourself that you are making better choices now.
 - Try a different store, such as a fruit and vegetable market.

DISCUSS:

What additional eating cues did your group identify?

What ideas did your group come up with for forming new behaviors for these eating cues?



For a virtual session, encourage participants to type their ideas in the chat window in the web conferencing tool.

DO:

Share the following (if not mentioned by participants):

- **I like to nibble on this while I watch TV.**
 - Avoid eating out of large containers and bags. Get yourself a single serving.
 - Knit, ride a stationary bike, use resistance bands, or lift weights or water bottles while you're watching TV. Use the commercial break or the end of an episode as an opportunity to get up and move around.
 - Chew sugar-free gum or drink a glass of water. Or nibble on non-starchy veggies, like celery, carrots, or broccoli. Or eat a piece of fruit.
 - Eat only at the kitchen or dining room table so you start to establish a new pattern of where you eat.
- **I see the drive-through on my way home from work and I stop.**
 - Order a healthy option from the menu.
- **I'm enjoying this time with my friends or family—I deserve this!**
 - Swap your alcoholic drink for zero-sugar options like sparkling water, diet soda, or coffee.
 - Use a plate to keep track of the amount of food you're eating.
- **I'm really hungry, and it's easier to open a package than to prepare a dish.**
 - Stock up on healthy items, like baby carrots, cheese sticks, or small servings of unsalted/low-salt nuts.
 - Prepare small servings of healthy items when you put the packages away.

- **This looks or smells tempting.**
 - Keep a supply of healthy items that you like. Make sure they are visible and ready to eat. For example, keep cut-up veggies in your fridge and a bowl of fruit on your table.
 - If you have something you can't resist, don't add it to your shopping list. Enjoy that food or drink outside your home.
 - Keep unhealthy items out of sight or make them hard to reach.
 - Avoid walking by vending machines and "free" food.
 - Keep healthy snacks on hand.
- **I don't want to waste food.**
 - Cook smaller amounts.
 - Store the leftovers in the fridge or freezer.
 - Give it away.
 - Remind yourself that your health is more important than a few bites of food.
- **I see TV commercials or social media ads of tempting foods.**
 - Try not to look at them.
 - Look for photos and videos of healthy food.
 - Follow sites that include healthier recipes.

DISCUSS:

What additional cues for inactivity did groups identify?

What ideas did your group come up with for forming new behaviors for the inactivity cues?



For a virtual session, encourage participants to type their ideas in the chat window in the web conferencing tool.

DO:

Share the following (if not mentioned by participants):

- **Watching TV or sporting events**
 - Be active during commercials or breaks.
 - Ride a stationary bike or walk in place while you watch TV.
 - Do stretches or yoga while you watch TV.
- **Talking on the phone**
 - Walk around while talking on the phone.
- **Playing video games on the computer**
 - Limit your time on the computer so that you only play for a specific, short amount of time, then do something active.
 - Set a timer to take a movement break.
 - Play stand-up interactive video games.
- **Hanging out with friends and family**
 - Plan a get-together that includes active movement, such as dancing or playing charades.
- **Waiting in the car for kids to finish school/practice**
 - Take a short walk while waiting.
- **Looking at smartphone, apps, social media**
 - Look at smartphone, apps, or social media while on a stationary bike.



Time Estimate: 5 minutes
Methods: Presentation, Facilitated Discussion

This part of the session helps participants identify patterns they want to change, cues associated with those patterns, and ways to change those patterns.

SAY:

The problem with behavior cues is that they can cause a pattern of choices that can then turn into an unhealthy eating habit. Let's focus now on cues that affect you and how you can successfully manage them.

DO:

Please look at “My Cues” on page 9 in the Participant Guide.



For a virtual session, use the screen share feature to display “My Behavior Cues” from the Participant Guide for all participants to view.

DO:

Use ice cream as an example to explain the relationship between cues and patterns of behavior.

SAY:

Imagine, for a moment, the first time you had ice cream. Maybe your grandmother bought it for you, without your parents knowing. It was a sweet and special treat. You connected the happy feeling of a special time with your grandmother with ice cream. Over your life, you had ice cream again and again—at birthday parties, on a summer vacation, as a special dessert, as a family treat after you walked to the ice cream parlor. Now, even the sight of an ice cream shop or an ad on the radio makes you want ice cream (and all those positive feelings you connect with ice cream!). Sometimes when you are feeling down, you want a big bowl of ice cream—but what you really want is a big serving of those happy feelings!

As you can see, it takes a long time to weave together these connections, and it can take time to unweave them. Although you may always have a special place in your heart for ice cream, and you can enjoy ice cream as part of healthy eating, you can create new connections, too. You can make ice cream cones with fresh fruit and light whipped cream for a birthday party. You can take a nature walk with your grandmother. You can call an old friend when you are feeling down.

DO:

Review the directions and walk through the examples provided in the Participant Guide. Then, give participants a few minutes to complete the table.

DISCUSS:

Who would like to share a pattern, cue, and change that you've written?

SAY:

Remember, don't attempt to make all these changes at once. It takes a while to change patterns you've grown used to. Over time, the new behaviors will become more natural.



Time Estimate: 5 minutes
Methods: Presentation, Facilitated Discussion

Participants will use a list of common cues and feelings to help them identify their unhealthy eating habits or choices associated with them. Then, they will think about why and how they will make an alternate choice.

SAY:

The way you are feeling can have a big impact on your food choices and eating patterns. We don't always make the best decisions when we're hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, or even when we're happy or celebrating. When we have spent the day making a lot of decisions, we may run out of the mental energy to make healthy ones. There's a reason that lots of highly processed foods are right next to the checkout at grocery stores!

DO:

Please look at "Emotions and Cues Lead to Choices" on page 11 in the Participant Guide.



For a virtual session, use the screen share feature to display "Emotions and Cues Lead to Choices" from the Participant Guide for all participants to view.

DO:

Review the directions and give participants a few minutes to complete the table.

DISCUSS:

Who would like to share an eating habit or choice for one of the cues and feelings?

Why do you want to change it?

What will you do to change it?

DO:

Share the following (if not mentioned by participants):

- **I feel tired.**
 - Go to bed earlier. Drink a glass of water or chew sugar-free gum instead of eating.
- **I feel stressed.**
 - Find a new way to care for yourself, like taking a long bath, going to bed early, or spending time in nature.
 - Manage your feelings in a healthy way. For example, take some deep breaths, call a friend to talk, or listen to some music.
- **I feel angry.**
 - Ease your feelings in healthy ways. For instance, talk with a friend, watch a funny movie, pray, or journal.
- **I feel nervous.**
 - Keep your hands busy with writing a postcard, organizing your junk drawer, or working on a project or craft.
- **I feel happy.**
 - Eat a healthier version of a food.
 - Have a very small serving of the food you want to eat.
 - Share the food with someone else.
 - Make new memories of eating healthy dishes.
- **I feel bored.**
 - Do something healthy: go for a walk, mow the lawn, or try a new healthy recipe.
- **I feel lonely.**
 - Contact your friends or family.
 - Meet people: take a class, join a team or club, or volunteer.
 - Think about fostering or adopting a pet.



Time Estimate: 5 minutes

SAY:

Please look at your Action Plan Journal. Let's spend the next few minutes making a new action plan.

Keep in mind what worked and what didn't work well for you since our last session. Are there any changes that you want to make to your new routines? Are you ready for a new routine?

Also, keep in mind what we discussed today about behavior cues and how they can lead to unhealthy choices.

As you try out and practice your new routine, make sure to add in the following to make it automatic:

- Make your new routine easy and the old one harder to follow.
- Build in a healthy reward.
- Create times to repeat and practice your new routines.

If you are ready to add another routine, complete these 3 steps:

1. Identify what current routine needs to change or stop.
2. Plan a new routine that helps you make a positive change that will stick.
3. List cues or hints for when to use your new routine.

DO:

Give participants a few minutes to make their action plan.



Time Estimate: 5 minutes

SAY:

We have come to the end of our meeting. Today, we discussed behavior cues.

We talked about:

- What a cue is and how we create and re-create patterns connected to getting groceries, eating, and inactivity
- Common cues for getting groceries, eating, and inactivity and ways to change unhealthy patterns associated with them.
- Your own cues that lead to overeating or less healthy choices
- How emotions and cues lead to your food choices and eating patterns

DISCUSS:

Do you have questions about anything we talked about today?

SAY:

Next time, we'll talk about the things you tried at home, including your action plan. We'll also talk about [include specific topics that will be presented in the next session].

Thank you for coming to this session. Remember to bring your Participant Guide and Action Plan Journal to the next session.

End of meeting.