

WEEK ELEVEN – REVAMP YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Learning:

- Tips
- Restructuring
- Support from others

You have now learned so much about your eating habits, the recommendations for your body and mind and what you can do to prevent and deal with cravings. Revamping your environment can be an important step to providing yourself the support to be successful. Surrounding yourself with encouraging and positive people will help you to keep your goals in mind and stay on track. Preventing and avoiding vulnerable situations can also help you keep you on track. Here are some helpful tips to get you started.

1. Always have a plan of action

Experiencing an unknown situation or a sudden change of plans can throw off your regular routine. Always have a plan of action in mind or a tentative plan of action for situations that might arise suddenly. The more prepared you can be by identifying barriers that might come up in daily life, the more successful you will be in overcoming those barriers. For example, someone at work brings in pizza and brownies for lunch. You love pizza and brownies. If you prepared healthy snacks and a lunch ahead of time, you are less likely to make the unhealthy spur of the moment decision. If you didn't bring your lunch, you would be more inclined to go for the pizza and brownies as you didn't have a plan of action.

2. Eat before you grocery shop

Never shop on an empty stomach, or when you are really hungry, as you will buy more than you need. Your stomach and mind will do the deciding. Write a grocery list after you have eaten a meal and go grocery shopping after you have had a satisfying, nutritious meal; you are less likely to buy tempting foods.

3. Stick to your list

Write your list and stick to it! Do not buy impulse items that are associated with cravings. Stick to your plan of action and load up your cart and kitchen with healthy nutritious food. Resist the urge to try every new item you bought from the grocery store when you get home. If you shop after you have eaten, you will better control your appetite and cravings.

4. Store food in the refrigerator and cupboards

Keep food out of sight and out of mind from the beginning. Keep foods commonly associated with cravings in cupboards you don't use frequently. Reduce the amount of times you might "see" foods that could trigger a non-hunger-related craving.

5. Do not eat in front of the TV or while distracted

Eat while sitting at the table and portion out the amount you intend on eating. Don't rely on stopping after a small handful of trail mix when you are eating out of the bag. Be mindful and pay attention to what you are doing. Keep in mind how your behaviours might influence your mood.

6. Family/friend get-togethers

Have a plan of action before you get there. Offer to bring healthy options such as vegetables, a salad or lean meat to grill. Don't show up and expect the items you want will be there. Be proactive and ask ahead of time what is being served. Offering to bring healthy options will allow you to better stick to your plan. Having family and friends over to your house might also help you to plan out healthy options. You might even eat a small meal or snack before you go!

7. Dinner parties

Plan out your course of action and execute it! If you are allowing yourself to indulge for one night, don't worry about having a strict plan. If you expect or want to make the dinner party fit into your healthy eating plan, determine what options you might have, how you might structure your day differently and even have a small healthy snack to tide your appetite over.

8. Holidays

Allow yourself to enjoy the holidays and the excitement that surrounds them. Allow yourself to enjoy the food that is served; however, have a plan of action before you get there. What will your portions look like, what will you do if seconds are offered, what will you do with the dessert, how might you structure your plate to stick to your healthy eating plan? There are a lot of ways to enjoy the holidays and stick to a healthy eating plan. Determine your solution before the holiday begins! Remember, goal setting is the key to success.

9. Sporting events, movies, plays, etc.

Whatever the event might be, understand your options and create a course or plan of action before you arrive. If you want to stick to a healthy eating plan and know the options available might not be the best, try eating a small meal or snack before you go and enjoying the event itself. Stay clear from standing next to the food while socializing or you will be tempted to reach for the food.

10. Find your long-term support

Surround yourself with friends and loved ones who support you, know your goals and want you to succeed. Share your goals and request support if needed. Ask others to alter behaviours, if needed, to help you be successful. For example, if your friend chooses to eat chips and cookies in front of the TV next to you each night and you love chips and cookies, you might request he or she help support you by eating the chips and cookies in the kitchen or informing him or her you will watch TV in a different room until the food is out of sight and out of mind. Communication is key, especially if you do not have control over your environment. Find your support system and make your goals and plan of action evident!

Self-exploration and behaviour exploration

Evaluate your environment. What areas might be making you vulnerable to poor decisions? What changes might you make to create a successful and healthy environment?

Evaluate your plan of action for holidays, dinner parties, family and friend get-togethers. Do you have a plan of action? Identify times when you feel pressure or vulnerable to poor decisions. How might you change these situations?

Goal setting: Set SMART goals to work on for the next week

A key point to any successful plan is to complete and review your goals on an ongoing basis. Complete the following goals sheet based on the information this chapter covered. Put pen to paper to determine what changes you need to make to ensure that you have adequate nutrients from all food groups to create a healthy diet. Focus on what you believe you need to change to improve things in this area. Identify your needs, obstacles, challenges and back-up plan to create long-term positive change.

What are three small changes you can make today to restructure your environment for success?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What benefits might these changes provide? When will you make these changes?

Communicate your goals, needs and plan of action with your support system. Let them know what you need to be successful!

Use your food diary three days this week to identify how your environment might be affecting your food choices.