

# Behavior module

16-WEEK CURRICULUM

## SABOTEUR: WITH YOU OR AGAINST YOU?

### Identifying the Diet Saboteur

“Have some more lasagna...” “Split a piece of pie with me...” Have you ever wondered why the people around you become your worst enemies the moment you decide to diet? Why is it that people feel so uncomfortable? Do they wonder if the new you will like the old friend? Don’t be afraid to assert your right to be thin. Help those around you understand how their actions influence you and give them suggestions for being more supportive.

### Four Steps to Use When Asking for Help

1. State the problem areas and situations with which you need help or support.
2. Explain how you feel about the problem and why you need help with its resolution.
3. Detail the action you wish your supporter to take.
4. Results—describe to them the results that you expect.

### The Politics of Power

Unfortunately, many relationships are based on power and control. When efforts at weight reduction threaten to tip the balance of power in a relationship, sabotage often results. The diet saboteurs are comfortable with your relationship as is and are reluctant to see it change. You need to recognize the wolves in sheep’s clothing and assert your right to be thin.

Overpowering the Diet Saboteur	
When they:	You should:
Bring you gifts of food	Assert your right to be free of temptation. Your needs come first.
Urge you to eat	Guilt is powerful. Your refusal to eat is NOT the problem here.
Eat your favorites in front of you	Refuse to be manipulated by this friend. Get away.
Leave your favorite food out	Tell them you will not tolerate their attempt to sabotage your diet.

### Take Charge of Your Life

Being true to yourself means not having to settle for anything. Settling is comfortable. When you’re comfortable, you are less likely to experience rejection. On the other hand, settling inevitably results in a lack of fulfillment.

Weight loss signals control. Weight loss also signals a readiness to come to terms with your personal fears and insecurities. Overcoming obesity is a major feat. As with recovery from other addictive behaviors such as gambling and alcoholism, weight loss is an active process—a long and multifaceted process of change. It will not occur overnight.

### Dealing with Sabotage

Unfortunately, some people in your life may not support your efforts to lose weight. Weight loss success or a change in the family’s routine or in a spouse’s or friend’s appearance can make some people feel uneasy.

Once you realize that a person you care about is hurting your weight loss efforts, you can try to convert the person into a supporter. Tell the person how the unsupportive comments or behaviors make you feel and what the person can do differently. Be realistic in your expectations and assertive, but not demanding, in your requests. For example, instead of insisting that your spouse or mother

cook differently for the whole family, you could ask that salad be included with dinner. If you're unable to speak with the saboteur, you could ignore the comments, say "no, thank you," or temporarily stay away from the person until you have a chance to work out a solution.

Family issues relating to your desire to lose weight and eat differently can be a challenge. To minimize resentment, pressure to change, or guilt about family members' own eating habits or weight, try to introduce changes gradually. For example, start with one low calorie, low-fat meal per week and slowly increase the number. Explain the benefits of this healthier way of eating to your family and involve them in food-planning decisions as much as possible. Expect some resistance, but be patient. Family members may change their minds and tastes over time.

If supportive people are not around when you need them, then YOU can be your own source of support. Think about the positive things you do daily to manage your weight. Take credit for achievements that bring you closer to your weight loss goals.

Some people who want to lose weight may prefer to go it alone or may only want support with certain aspects of weight loss. That's fine. However, if you want support from people around you, these guidelines will help you get the support you need:

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### **Decide what type of support you desire.**

For example, do you want an empathetic listener? An occasional pep talk? A walking partner? Someone to put away leftovers?

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### **Choose individuals who can provide the support you're seeking.**

People who have been supportive in the past will likely help, but people who are struggling with their own weight issues or feel threatened by your weight loss success may not be supportive.

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### **Ask for what you want.**

Tell your supporters that you'd like their help and why it is important to you. Then make your request specific, clear and realistic. For example, instead of, "Help me exercise more," say, "Please walk with me after dinner tonight." Instead of, "Don't bring tempting foods into the house," say, "Please keep the chocolate bars in the top kitchen cabinet instead of on the counter.

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### **Ask your request in a polite and positive manner.**

Highlight what is helpful rather than what is wrong. For example, rather than, "Must you eat that ice cream in front of me?" say, "I know how much you like to eat ice cream when we're watching TV together, but it would really help me if you would eat it at another time. I'd appreciate it so much if you would do that for me." If your request is not agreeable to the other person, try a compromise, like eating low-fat ice cream or sugar-free popsicles instead of premium ice cream.

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### **Show your appreciation.**

Say "thank you" and let them know how much their support means to you. Offer to return the favor in some other way.

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### **Look to your weight center group for support.**

They can offer empathy and support when you need it. You'll also learn how others have dealt with challenges you may be experiencing as you lose weight.

## *Activity: Building Support*

Think about the people in your life (i.e. family members, friends, co-workers, etc.) who you feel will support your weight-loss efforts. List their names in the first column below. Consider the type of support each of these individuals or groups can give you, and write it in the second column. In the third column, write down how you will ask for support, being specific, positive and appreciative in your request.

Source of Support	Type of Support	Request for Support