CHAPTE R PROGRAM

SEVEN SABOTEURS

Presenter Guidelines:
1. This program is designed to be presented at chapter to address the role of saboteurs and how they affect our weight-management efforts. It has been written as a basic script for you to make presentation easier—presenter instructions will be in color and italic; everything else can be read aloud to the members.

2. **Materials Needed**—have note cards to distribute to each member or have members bring in their own note cards. You may also want to supply pencils or pens, or have members bring their own.

3. **Throughout the program, members will be asked to share their thoughts and experiences with the various saboteurs.**

4. **After greeting the members, begin.**

It’s inevitable—on our weight-loss journey we will encounter saboteurs…and they are not limited to the friend who urges you to order the chocolate fudge cheesecake for dessert. Actually, saboteurs can be both external and internal—from our surrounding environment to our feelings, and everywhere in between.

Today, we are going to discuss seven common saboteurs and how we can identify or relate to them. We will then discuss and develop strategies we may use to overcome these saboteurs.

*(Distribute note cards and pencils/pens, if you are providing them.)*

I am passing out note cards that we will be using for this program.

*(OR, instruct with the following.)*

Please make sure you have your note cards available to use for this program.

Saboteur #1: “Poor, pitiful me…”

Have these thoughts ever crossed your mind?

- Poor me…so-and-so can eat whatever they want and not gain a pound. If I even look at food I seem to gain ten!
- Poor me…everyone else gets to eat bread and sweets without a care in the world and I’m stuck with lousy celery sticks!

Relax! We’ve all been there and a little self-pity from time to time is only human. However, frequent feelings of self pity and resentment can and will sabotage even the best resolve. It’s time to move from thoughts of “missing out” to thoughts of freedom. It’s time to ask whether we are depriving ourselves or if we are freeing ourselves...
from the foods and behaviors that ultimately make us even unhappier in the end.

Let’s get it out of our systems right now and have a mini pity party. Who would like to share some thoughts of self-pity that they tend to have?

(Encourage 2 or 3 responses from the group.)

Now that we have that out of our systems, let’s take out our note cards and write down all of the advantages of losing weight or keeping it off. For example, you may write, “I will feel so much better,” or “I will be able to play with my children and grandchildren,” or “I won’t dread my next doctor’s appointment,” and so on. This week, whenever a pitiful thought rears its head, quiet that sabotaging voice by pulling out your card to remind yourself of all of the advantages of making and sustaining a change.

(Allow members 3 minutes to write on their cards.)

Saboteur #2: Eating Cues

Eating cues are everywhere and we need learn to identify our own. Eating cues can be defined as external or emotional triggers that give us the urge to eat. It seems that we have been far removed the most basic and natural eating cue—physical hunger. Instead of eating in response to grumbling tummies, we eat because the phone rang, because our favorite movie is on, someone brought cookies to the office, we are bored, or the food is just plain there. If we continuously pair food with a certain activity or emotion, eventually that activity or emotion alone will trigger the urge to eat—regardless of whether or not we are physically hungry.

Let’s share some of our own eating cues. For example, do any of us:

• Order popcorn at the movies, even when we aren’t at all hungry?
• Eat at a certain time everyday just because that’s when we always eat, hungry or not?
• Snack at our desk or in our car without being fully aware or conscious of what we are doing?
• Grab a snack while we are on the phone with a friend?

(Encourage 2 or 3 responses from the group.)

What are your eating cues? This week, your assignment is to identify at least one eating cue. The best way to do this is to arm yourself with a food journal. Most of us are aware of the benefit of recording what and how much we eat in a daily journal. This week, go one step further and also record why you ate, how hungry you were, and what you were doing. Keeping a record of this will help you “catch” your eating cues as you learn to identify whether you are eating in response to physical hunger or some external cue.

Saboteur #3: Other People

Do any of these comments sound familiar?

• I miss the old you!
• You’ve changed since you’ve started losing weight!
• Oh, c’mon one piece of cake isn’t going to kill you!

If so, chances are you have a saboteur on your hands be it a spouse, friend or parent. Change is hard, not only for us, but for many of the people around us about whom we care. Whether their comments and actions are well-meaning or a tad malicious, it is crucial to prepare ourselves and our responses.

Let’s share some comments that we frequently hear from saboteurs. How do we typically react to these comments? What are some things we can say to counter these comments?

(Allow 2-3 minutes for discussion.)

Saboteur #4: The Inner Rebel

Remember the cartoons that had the devil on one shoulder and the angel on the other? Can you relate this to tempting food situations in which you find yourself? Many of us have that inner rebel or mischievous voice that may say, “Oh to heck with it, I’ve already blown it for the day!” or “Maybe I’ll be bad and just sneak another piece of cake—no one has to know.” But the fact is, you’ll know and thus will repeat the guilt and overeating cycle.

Who here has heard this type of discouraging inner voice when it comes to food? Do you usually give in to this voice?

(Encourage 2 or 3 members to share and explain)

I encourage all of us to try something the next time we are faced with this conflict: Flip your note cards over and write the following phrase: “Go ahead and eat this if you want, but this is how you will feel.” Take some time to think about how you usually feel when you choose to eat in these situations.
(Allow members 2-3 minutes to write on their cards.)

The next time you hear the little devil on your shoulder, pull out your card and read the statement. You may also find it helpful to flip the card over and once again review the advantages of making and sustaining a change.

**Saboteur #5: Entitlement**

The entitlement saboteur can be especially tricky because, in a way, it’s rational. “I’m tired, I worked hard all day, and I deserve this [enter sugar-, fat-, and calorie-laden treat here].” I’ve earned this treat …right?” The entitlement saboteur tends to catch us at a weak moment. Maybe we’re exhausted from the day, maybe we don’t want to put in the effort to prepare something healthy, or maybe we just plain don’t care tonight.

When the entitlement saboteur rears its self-righteous head, it’s time for us to take back the power.

You don’t have to pull out a note card, you don’t have to recite an affirmation; all you have to do is ask yourself one simple question—“Will this food ultimately make me feel better?” We’re not talking about the brief moment of pleasure, either. We’re talking about how you will truly feel after you eat.

**Saboteur #6: Just a Bite**

Anyone who has ever vowed to having “just a bite” can probably admit to having that “one bite” turning into two bites, three bites…you know the rest.

Sometimes, “just a bite” is all we need to satisfy that taste for sweet or salty. Here are a few ways to eat just a bite—and, yes, it is possible:

- Eat the bite slowly and savor its flavor, texture, aroma, and taste. Devote your attention to that one bite and savor the moment. It’s been suggested that that first bite is the most pleasurable.
- After taking a bite of, say, a piece of cake or brownie, have something ready to counter the flavor such as mint or peppermint tea.
- After the bite, leave the food and the room and occupy yourself with some other activity.

Who here thinks it’s possible to eat just a bite of a treat? And who here thinks it’s best to avoid a “trigger” food altogether? Let’s talk about it—after all, different strategies work for different people.

**Saboteur #7: “I’ll start first thing tomorrow!”**

This, of course, means that you’re allowed to indulge one last time, right? Wrong!

Thomas Merton once wrote, “This day shall never come again.” Ponder this statement the next time you make a grand statement to “start tomorrow!” If something is truly important to you, why wouldn’t you want to get started right away?

(Encourage group discussion using the following questions:)

- Who here has vowed to “start first thing tomorrow!” prior to starting yet another diet? Raise your hands.
- Did you actually get started? If so, how long did this last?

Another way to think of Merton’s quote is to take the road to change one day at a time. Changing ingrained habits, behaviors and attitudes toward food and physical activity is difficult, but not impossible. The thought of making and sustaining a change can be very overwhelming, making us an easy target for a saboteur to step in and discourage us. When we think of change in the context of just one day, however, what once seemed overwhelming suddenly becomes do-able. Saboteurs are then tricked into thinking that tomorrow they will have their way—but we know better. When we postpone old habits and behaviors for just one day, then another, then another, the desire to go back to our old ways slowly starts to fade away.

**Closing the Meeting**

Which saboteurs from today’s meeting are the most apparent to you? Is there one that really struck a chord with you? I encourage each one of us to use at least one strategy mentioned in today’s meeting.

Next week, we will stand up, one-by-one, and share our experience with a saboteur and the strategy we used to counteract this saboteur. It could be a prepared statement we use in response to a spouse or friend’s comment, or how we managed to eat just one bite. Whatever the saboteur and strategy, be prepared to share!
The information presented through this program is educational and should not substitute for the advice of a physician or other qualified health provider. The information is also general in nature and may not suit an individual’s particular health situation. You should not rely on any information in this program in place of a visit, call, consultation or the advice of a physician or other qualified health care provider.