

A woman is shown from the chest down, holding a green apple in her left hand. Her right hand is held up, palm facing forward, as if to stop something. In the foreground, a chocolate-glazed donut with colorful sprinkles sits on a white plate. The background is a light-colored wall with a subtle pattern of grey swirls.

Module 10

**CROWD OUT SUGAR,
ONE STEP AT A TIME**

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Let's face it. Many of us – and our clients – often eat more sugar than is good for us. But, it really is possible to eat less sugar without sacrificing much – if any – of the pleasures of eating. The best strategy is to find a few simple, lasting ways to cut back on sugar! Experiment with what works best for you by choosing a few of these ideas and trying them for a few weeks. Surprising as it may sound, **many people who cut back on sugar say they find their new eating habits more pleasurable than their old ones.** You can have a sweet life – even without all of the sweets!



HERE ARE 20 IDEAS THAT WILL INSPIRE YOU TO CROWD OUT SUGAR:

1| Start by cutting added sweeteners.

Cutting added sweeteners, like granulated sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, maple syrup, and molasses, is an obvious place to start. You don't need to worry so much about the sugars that are a natural part of fruit, vegetables, and dairy products. Most people don't overeat these types of naturally occurring sugars because their encompassing fibers, vitamins, and minerals are satiating.

Challenge: Eliminate added sweeteners for one month.

Sometimes it's less scary to know a decision doesn't have to last forever. Try eliminating all added sugars for just one month. Then, add back the ones that you miss the most.

2| Avoid pre-packaged food.

Pre-packaged food is where most added sugars hide. **Try eating food that doesn't come in a package!** Can you meal prep or batch cook and freeze meals once a week to help provide quick-and-easy options to crowd out frozen and packaged foods?

If you do eat pre-packaged food, remember these numbers: 5, 10, and 10.

- 5 = less than 5 ingredients
- 10 = less than 10 grams of sugar per serving
- 10 = more than 10 grams of protein per serving

3| Beware of “healthy” foods.

Become aware of hidden sugars even in so-called “healthy” foods. **Read ingredients**, and recognize that sugar even lurks in foods that don’t taste sweet or that are positioned as healthy. Granola bars, fruit yogurts, and juices are likely culprits in this category.

4| Appreciate natural sweetness.

Fruit, nuts, and other real foods contain natural sweetness without the sugar overload of processed foods or the detrimental effects of artificial sweeteners.

5| Don’t confuse your body with artificial sweeteners.

Stay away from “fake” foods whenever possible. Eating a whole-foods diet that has a low-glycemic load and is rich in phytonutrients is a healthier strategy.

6| Try a little stevia or monk fruit.

A little bit in your coffee or tea is usually fine. If you choose stevia, make sure you’re buying 100% pure organic stevia, not the kind that contains bulking agents, like maltodextrin (corn) and added flavors.

7| Track what you eat and how it makes you feel.

It’s important to track at two different time intervals: 20 minutes after and 2 hours after each meal. **Your body will tell you what’s right for you, so try to listen to it.**

8| Check the food in your pantry.

Sugar is added to many pantry staples, such as chicken stock, soup, tomato sauce, salami, smoked salmon, tortillas, and crackers. When you go shopping, compare various brands, and choose ones with little added sugar.

Here's a helpful list of the many sweetener names that lurk on ingredient lists: nyti.ms/2JJEAqy

9| Eat a healthy breakfast.

Research from the National Weight Control Registry, which tracks the habits of successful weight loss maintainers, shows that eating breakfast is a successful strategy. When you wake up, your blood sugar is low, so a healthy breakfast helps provide stabilization for the day to come.



10| Expand your concept of “breakfast foods.”

Many breakfast foods that sound as if they’re healthy are, in fact, filled with sugar. Some yogurts have more sugar than any other ingredient. And, some kinds of granola have more sugar per serving than sweetened cereals typically marketed to children. As Gary Taubes, author of *The Case Against Sugar*, says: Breakfasts have become “lower-fat versions of dessert.”

**In much of the world, breakfast is a savory meal, not a sweet one.
Try some of these low sugar ideas:**

- Plain oatmeal. Flavor it with fresh fruit, nuts, or cinnamon.
- Homemade granola let you to keep the sugar as low as you can.
- Scrambled or fried eggs
- Fresh fruit
- Plain yogurt
- A handful of nuts
- Vegetables, like spinach, carrots, and sweet potatoes.

11| Crowd out unhealthy choices.

- Drink water instead of soda.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables instead of sugary foods.
- Swap packaged foods with questionable health claims for homemade snacks.
- Eat dark leafy greens in place of empty carbohydrates.
- Add sweeter foods, like roasted vegetables, to combat feelings of deprivation.
- Swap mindless snacking for primary food.

12| Avoid most beverages in bottles and cans.

Sweetened beverages are by far the biggest source of added sugar in the Standard American Diet – 47% according to the Federal Government. Soda – along with sweetened sports drinks, energy drinks, and sweetened iced teas – are essentially flavored, liquefied sugar. A single 16-ounce bottle of cola has 52 grams of sugar. That’s more added sugar than most adults should consume in an entire day!

To crowd out that soda habit, try shifting to seltzer, club soda, or sparkling water. It turns hydration into a small treat that’s still calorie-free. Some brands now have as many as 20 different flavors, all without added sugar. If they’re not sweet enough for you, you can also add a dash of juice.

13| **Limit fruit juice.**

Real juice doesn't have added sweeteners. But, even real fruit juice can have levels of natural sugars that can be dangerous because of how efficiently juice delivers those sugars. You're not eating the stomach-filling fiber of an orange when you drink a glass of orange juice.

14| **Skip the sauce.**

What's hiding in your ketchup? Sugar, most likely. The biggest ingredient in many barbecue sauces is high-fructose corn syrup. Many pickles – especially those labeled as “bread and butter” – are heavily sweetened. Many pasta sauces have added sugar. Even some mustards have added sugar. **Read labels carefully, and experiment with making your own sauces and opting for spices instead.**

15| **Get support.**

Being included in communities and staying connected with others are important to our physical and emotional health. **Social connections are critical to our health.** Ask family and friends for their support. Chances are they will benefit, too! The IIN community is a amazing place for establishing healthy connections with like-minded individuals!

16| **Exercise to increase happy brain chemicals.**

Exercise has a positive impact on all three happy brain chemicals: Dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins. Walking is a great way to start.

17| **You don't have to give up dessert entirely.**

If you really want dessert, treat yourself! Just be mindful of your portion size, and choose quality over quantity. Fresh fruit can be a very satisfying sweet treat! It's sweet, delicious and full of nutrients and fiber. And, keep this in mind: The less sugar you eat, the sweeter fruit will taste!

18| **Snack mindfully.**

Snacks can too easily turn into yet another dessert. Many granola bars and power bars are packed with added sugars. The same goes for canned and dried fruits. And, don't kid yourself about those flavored coffee drinks: They're more like a milkshake than a cup of coffee.

What are better alternatives for snacking? Nuts, popcorn, and fresh fruit are all great options.

19| **Try the Emotional Freedom Tapping Technique.**

One simple technique many people find useful with sugar cravings is the Emotional Freedom Tapping (EFT) technique. Gabrielle Bernstein has a simple overview on "How to End Sugar Cravings" with EFT: gabbybernstein.com/how-to-end-sugar-cravings-with-eft

20| **Practice daily self-care.**

Practicing self-care every day is beneficial in many ways. It can be as simple as lighting a candle or having a cup of tea. These small ways of honoring yourself can reduce stress, distract you from cravings, and boost your happy brain chemicals.

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