

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

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AN RCS Early Childhood FAMILY NEWSLETTER FROM YOUR
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER

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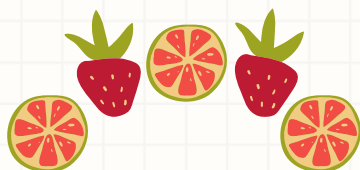
Amy Phaneuf

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ENCOURAGING POSITIVE EATING HABITS WITH YOUR CHILD

When children eat well, they feel well. The following suggestions come from pediatricians to build healthy ideas and eating to grow lifetime habits:

- Your job as a parent is to offer foods with nutritional value in a warm, calm setting and to have a regular schedule for meals.
- Your child's job is to decide whether he or she is hungry and how much food to eat when it is offered.
- This division of responsibility means that adults must provide the right support, structure, and opportunities.
- Children can then be trusted to eat the amount they need to learn to be comfortable with unfamiliar food.



“To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, RIGHT HERE AND NOW.”

- FRED ROGERS



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT MEALTIME

ADULTS CHOOSE



WHAT To eat

- Offer a variety of foods - both familiar and unfamiliar
- Always have something on the table that your child likes
- Offer the same menu to everyone.
No special orders!

WHEN to eat

- Have meals at the same time daily
- Provide planned, sit-down snack in between meals
- Discourage food and drinks (aside from water) between meals and snacks

WHERE to eat

- Sit down with children to eat meals and snacks, when possible
- Avoid letting children eat while playing or moving around.
- Remove all distractions (TV, iPad, games, phones)

By using the division of responsibility, parents help children:

- Feel good about eating
- Learn to like the food their family eats
- Enjoy family meals and behave well at mealtime
- Eat the amount that will support their own healthy growing pattern

From Ellyn Satter's

Division of Responsibility in Feeding



CHILDREN CHOOSE



HOW MUCH to eat

- Will choose what foods to eat from what is offered
- Will eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full
- Should not be asked to eat more or less than they desire.

WHETHER to eat

- Can choose to eat (or not eat) any meal or snack.
- Can respectfully decline any foods offered
- Will decide there are foods they do not like.

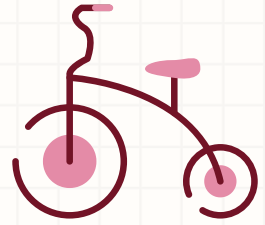


Feeding a child is a sacred mission for a parent.

~ T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

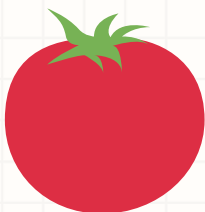
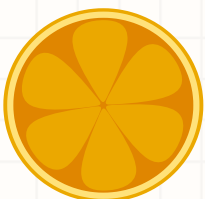
PATIENCE WORKS BETTER THAN PRESSURE

- **We often expect children to know how to eat and enjoy different foods, but we forget it's a skill they must learn from adults first** - just like riding a bike, writing their name, or brushing their teeth.
- Children learn this skill best when adults understand their child's needs, offer plenty of opportunities to try foods, trust that the child is capable of learning and rely on trust rather than pressure.



WHAT ADULTS SHOULD EXPECT FROM CHILDREN

- Children begin to get comfortable with food through exposure - seeing, touching, smelling, or tasting. Children may need dozens of exposures to a food before they learn to eat it. With new foods, a child might:
 - Look at it but not taste it. Children may need to watch you eat a food many times before they are willing to try it.
 - Touch and play with it, but still not taste it.
 - Put the food in their mouth to learn about its taste and texture, then spit or take it out.
 - Swallow the food but decide not to eat more.



HOW TO USE RELAX AND USE PATIENCE

Once you have done **your jobs** with deciding what, when and where to eat, allow children to do **their jobs** with eating (deciding whether and how much).

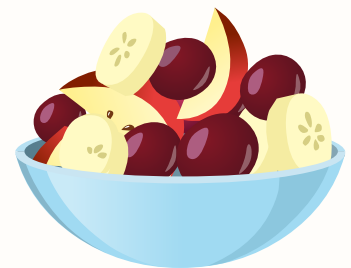
Take the pressure off eating with these tips:

- Always have something on the table your child is familiar with and likes. Pair new foods with foods your children like
- Include your child in the meal process by having them wash foods, tear lettuce, set the table, stir sauces, or measure ingredients.
- Talk about the sensory qualities of food, like taste, texture, color, and smell. to help kids become more familiar. You could say "Kiwis are brown and fuzzy on the outside, and soft and sweet on the inside. I think they taste a little like strawberries."
- Modeling is a powerful tool. Eat the same foods you want your child to eat. If your child sees you eating and enjoying food, they will be more likely to eat too.
- Allow your child to taste a new food and politely spit it into a napkin if they don't like it.
- Allow children to explore with their natural curiosity. Children might touch, smell or lick new foods to become familiar with them.
- Use dips or spread to help children learn to like new fruits or vegetables.
- Offer the same food in a variety of ways: raw, cooked, whole, or sliced.



NEVER PRESSURE CHILDREN TO EAT
Pressure is anything you would do or say to get your child to eat more, less, or differently than they would on their own. Pressuring a child may work to get them to eat differently in the moment, but it often backfires in the long-term. With pressure, children enjoy eating less and have fewer foods they're willing to eat. Pressure also teaches children to ignore their feelings of hunger and fullness, disrupting their ability to self-regulate food intake. Pressure might look like:

- trying to get children to eat certain foods
- trying to get children to eat more
- trying to get children to eat less
- using rewards or bribes to get children to eat anything
- trying to get children to eat foods before they are ready.
- trying to sneak foods.



Resources & for additional information:
Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding;
ellynsatterinstitute.org

Feeding Your Child (by Brazelton & Sparrow)

American Academy of Pediatrics:
healthychildren.org