

P reschool I ntervention R eferred T eam

March 15th-19th Weekly Newsletter

The Focus: The seemingly ordinary act of eating together as a family can have a surprisingly profound effect on nearly all aspects of children's psychological and social development.

- ★ "Children who regularly eat at home with their families come to see family dinner as a safe space they can rely on."

The Solution: Incorporate family meal times into daily routine. The list of benefits for kids who regularly share family meals is astonishing: They are more likely to eat healthfully, maintain an appropriate weight, have larger vocabularies, and get better grades.

Screen Time Tip:

Make your dining area **TECHNOLOGY FREE ZONE**. Avoid eating with television, computers, tablets, or phones. Besides the obvious impact on family discussions, being distracted while eating makes you eat more by making you less tuned in to the tastes and feels of the foods, and less aware of how much you are eating.

- ★ Children who are paying attention to a small screen, or a large one, are not getting the social and psychological benefits of a family dinner

Tips for Family Meals:

- ★ Allow the children to help out with meals (setting table, clearing dishes, older children can help with cutting and preparation)
- ★ Include children in planning menu

Communication Tip:

- ★ Dinner conversation is the richest, most powerful language experience of your child's life.
- ★ Talking and conversation is crucial (You can share stories about your own childhood or tell how parents met)

<https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/health-topics/magazine/table-talk>

Tactics for table talk:

The food is on the table, everyone has assembled and no one is saying a word. Sound familiar? Whether your children are in preschool or highschool, there are ways of getting them to open up. Avoid starting with "How was your day?"

- ★ Try these tactics to get them talking:

Roses & Thorns

Each family member shares one thing from their day that was great (those are the roses) and one thing that wasn't so good (the thorn). In addition to initiating conversation this adds the benefit of clueing you in to some things in your child's life-anxieties or accomplishments that they might otherwise have kept to themselves

Wish of the Week

Start a family journal in which each family member can write down or draw 1 wish for the coming week. Share the wish aloud during the meal. It is a great way to learn what is going on in their minds. The best part is that since all the wishes are recorded in a notebook you will have a keepsake that can be reviewed again on another day.

Card Tricks

You can buy boxes of Table Topics or make your own. Each card is printed with a conversation starter, such as "Which famous athlete would you like to meet?" "What is your favorite dessert?"

The Million \$\$ Question

Asking "What would you do with a million dollars? Is a classic. But there are a lot of great variations: What would you do if you didn't have to go to school for an entire year? Whom would you invite to your Birthday Party if you could invite anyone in the world.

