



Set Aside Time for Family Meals and Reconnect the Family Unit

The school year has begun and with jam-packed schedules, families may find it hard to make time for family meals at the dinner table. Still, it is important for families to go through their schedules and find a time to sit down at the dinner table in order to continue developing good family relationships.

Research has proven that family meals benefit everyone, especially children, in various ways. From a nutritional standpoint, when families eat together at home, children usually eat more vegetables, fruits and whole grains.

Preparing a meal also is a great way to enhance family relationships. Get the children involved in the preparation process. Younger kids can set the table, fold napkins and pour drinks. Older kids can help wash the produce, mix or stir the meal or even cook for the night while the parent becomes the kitchen helper.

Family meals also promote healthy dialogue by providing a way for parents and their children to reconnect and practice good communication skills, focusing on the quality of conversation. With family members being busy and pulled in different directions, it is important to get together and share what is going on in each other's lives.

So how do families find the time to have quality mealtime together? Well, there is no rule that says the family meal has to be for dinner. Every family is different and so is each family's schedule, so the family meal can be for breakfast or lunch if that works best. Also, to ensure family meals occur even during extremely busy times, families can prepare meals on the weekends or double the amount of food they make so they can freeze half of it and bring it out on a busy night.

Once the mealtime is determined, families need to minimize distractions during that time to ensure it is quality time. Turn off the TV, cell phones and other electronic devices and just spend that hour or so together, connecting with each other without those distractions.

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