

Food for Thought

What is mindful eating?

- Allowing yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food preparation and consumption by respecting your own inner wisdom.
- Choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savor and taste.
- Learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating.
- Acknowledging responses to food (likes, neutral or dislikes) without judgment.



Free Handout for Families from The Center for Mindful Eating

Dinner Time Expectation

Megrette Hammond MEd, RD, CDE

Parents are often confronted with lots of expectation: their own and society's. Expectations are so prevalent that they can become invisible, which gives them a sense of pressure that may be unhealthy. This is often the case regarding mealtime eating.



It seems that every parent knows their child should eat a balanced

diet and realizes how important family meal times are. Expectations are often thought of as standards, which a person is trying to meet. However, if we think about them a bit more, expectations may really be assumptions about information that we may not have. This is important to remember, especially when it comes to food and eating.

Changing expectations into exploration

Assumptions regarding meal times are common. For example it may be easier to assume that you and your kids have the same level of hunger. Additionally you might forget that your kids may like foods that you dislike. The best way to find out how hungry your child is, or what food he enjoys is to ask.

Talking with your child builds fond memories

The simple act of talking with your child about about his meal builds interest and fosters fond memories. When parents begin to ask questions about the meal, instead of focusing on the amount eaten, it helps the child know that you are interested in him. For example, instead of coaxing your child to eat another bite of dinner, ask "What did you like about your dinner?" If your child says "I didn't like anything." this is important information to hear. It replaces assumptions and expectations with accurate information that you got right from the source – your child.

Shifting your meal time focus

The easiest way to increase awareness at meal times is to focus on physical observations that are happening during a meal. For example, if the

food is hot, maybe see if you and your child can see any steam rising from the meal. Physical things about a meal are observable by *both* you and your child. Expanding this to include information and knowledge about food could be a next step. Share with your child what information you know about a food. This can include where it was grown, or how it was prepared, nutrition information or even personal stories about a food. The final aspect of a meal that can be explored is how your child feels about a food or the eating experience. Keep in mind there is no right answer to this question. A child's feelings are not right or wrong, they simply exist. Allowing him to share them openly builds trust.

Discovering a hidden benefit

A hidden benefit of these gentle conversations about food is that they can foster learning about your child's day, build trust and promote understanding of the many physical cues that a child might be experiencing during a meal.

Internet Resources

www.tcme.org
www.ellynsatter.com/
www.beyondhunger.org
www.bodypositive.com
www.hugs.com