



# Families Matter

## Parents/caregivers as agents of change for children's diets

When rushing around, living life day to day, parents and caregivers may not give a lot of thought to how much influence they have over the foods children eat now – and in the future.

This extends beyond merely choosing and serving their food or talking to them about the foods they are consuming. Humans learn in social contexts, meaning we learn from observing others. Research shows that the quality of a child's diet is related to the diet quality of their caregivers.

Does the diet of the parent/caregiver include adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables? If not, then the child's may not. Or, are the adults intentionally modeling healthy eating?

Modeling healthy eating includes behaviors such as intentionally trying to eat healthy food in front of children or displaying excitement about eating healthy foods. Research has shown for years that having family meals

together can influence the diet of children. However, it's not just eating together, but what you're eating together as a family, and children observing their caregivers making healthy choices.

Modeling these behaviors in front of children can help build their confidence to eat healthier while shaping norms about eating. In addition, children like to have autonomy – they like to make their own decisions. By encouraging children to eat healthier foods via social cues and modeling, parents/caregivers can encourage such choices while honoring autonomy.

This is a better approach than trying to get children to eat foods via force. In fact, research indicates this can create a great deal of tension between families at mealtime.

In addition to the concept of modeling via observation, if parents/caregivers adopt higher-quality eating patterns, they're more likely to have higher quality foods present in the home.

In turn, this makes children more familiar with these healthier choices, leading children to consume those foods both in and out of the home.

Some research takes it even further, examining the presence and/or absence of traditional healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables and those considered less healthy, such as foods rich in added sugars.

Unfortunately, our desire to consume those less-than-healthy choices can be powerful given those foods are generally very appealing and palatable. Having those foods present in excess can overpower our potential desire or intention to consume healthier choices. Social and environmental cues are important, and some research suggests these cues can be more impactful than merely setting rules about eating 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' foods."



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POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY EXTENSION

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# May is Mental Health Month

## Mental Health Challenge

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, join us as we partake in this weekly challenge throughout May.

### Mindful Monday:

Every Monday of this month, set aside time during your day to reflect, meditate, conduct breathing exercises, journal, or get out in nature.

**Tuesday Talks:** Every Tuesday of this month, practice leaning on someone you trust as part of your support system or write down any stressors that may be holding you back or weighing you down.

### Workout Wednesday:

Each Wednesday, dedicate at least 30 minutes to an exercise you enjoy. This can be anything from a walk, to a fitness class, weightlifting, or more.

**Thursday Therapy:** On Thursdays of this month, try utilizing the mental health resources included within your EAP program, or schedule an appointment with a mental health specialist to check in.

### Feel Good Friday:

Every Friday, focus on activities that refresh and revitalize your mood. Wander through a garden, paint a picture, connect with friends and family, or find something new that brings you joy.

## Rules that Work

**Having rules in print** is important. When the child breaks a rule, the parent can point to a printed sheet and ask, "What is the rule?" This takes the heat off the parent as the bad guy and places it on the "rule." Rules must be clearly stated and reasonable for the child's age, developmental level and emotional stability.

For example: The rule might read: "Marie's bed time is 8 p.m." When Marie tries to negotiate for a later time, the parent asks the child, "What is the rule?" and the answer is clear.

### RULE 1:

Follow directions quickly.



## Schedule Brian Power Into Summer

### Set a Time for Reading Every Day

This is something you can do whether your kids spend their days with you or another caregiver. After lunch is a great time to schedule a regular, daily, reading siesta. If your kids are young, read a story out loud to them at this time. Older children can use this time to read on their own. If you can, try to model the importance of reading by picking up a book for yourself at the same time.

### Set a Time For Learning

If your kids received home learning packets from their school or if you've picked out a particular workbook you'd like them to complete, set a regular block of time aside each day when they can work toward completing this project. In addition, plan to explore various topics your kids have shown an interest in. Summer is a great time to tap into their natural curiosity!



## Quick and Easy Pick UP

Feel like you spend all day picking things up and putting them back where they belong? STOP! Give each person a bin, tote, basket, etc. Put it on the stairs or in the hallway. Any kid stuff that ends up lying around the house, from random ball caps to books they're reading, gets tossed in the basket so they can grab it before heading up to their room.

## Simple Snack Tips

### Keep snacking simple

Parents don't need to spend more than 10 minutes preparing a wholesome snack that kids will love. If the snack takes more than 10 minutes to prepare, it's likely too complicated and chances are kids won't like it!

When choosing nutritious snacks for kids, those that have fewer, simple ingredients are always the better choices. Ideas include colorful veggie kabobs that can be made by threading grape tomatoes, cucumber slices, pea pods, and other veggies onto wooden skewers; serve with hummus or low-fat Ranch dip. Or, make a pinwheel sandwich by spreading nut butter and berries on a slice of whole grain bread and roll up.

Source: <http://www.thevillagenews.com/>

### Drinks lots of water

Summertime often means outdoor activities on hot days, so it's important to stay hydrated throughout the day. Teach your child to quench thirst with water. Add lemon, lime or orange slices to chilled water to entice kids to drink more water. For a little more pizzazz, serve sparkling water flavored with two tablespoons of cranberry or orange juice.

Remember, sodas are high calorie and have no nutritional value and they are not a good choice for staying hydrated.

Remember—sports drinks are not necessary for most youth activities or sports. To stay hydrated have them drink plenty of water before and during the event.

## More then ABC and 123

A mind is a muscle that needs exercise! In the summer keeping skills sharp is just as important as keeping knowledge gaining. Summer should be a time of fun and exploration which can be great for keeping their school readiness skills on point.

**Observing:** Sit with your child and look all around for things of a particular color or shape. For example, have your child name all the things he or she sees that are red or that are in the shape of a circle. Repeat with other colors and shapes. Take your child on a walk. Have your child look for yellow flowers, green signs, etc.

**Listening:** Tape-record familiar sounds around the house. Let your child play back the tape and identify the sounds. Hide a ticking clock in a room and let your child try to find it by listening.

**Following Directions:** Give your child two-or three-step directions to follow. For example, ask your child to pick up the blocks and put them on the shelf, or go up stairs, pick out a pair of shoes, and put them on. Play Simon Says with your child.

**Communication:** Let your child "read" a picture book to you. Ask your child lots of open-ended questions (questions that do not have yes or no answers). Instead of asking, "Did you have fun at Kayla's house?" Ask your child, "What games did you play at Kayla's house?"

**Remembering:** Ask your child to carefully look at three or four objects you have set out. Next, have your child look away as you remove one of them. Ask your child to look at the objects again and identify the missing object. Play a simplified version of My Grandmother's Trunk with your child. Say, "In my Grandmother's trunk I found a \_\_." Have your child repeat what you said and add the name of another item. Continue as many times as you and your child can remember.

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## Quick Fix Recipes



## Growing with Kids!

**Egg Carton Nursery** This activity gives you an early start on your garden. Help your child fill the cups of an empty egg carton with potting soil. Have him or her add one radish or carrot seed and a teaspoon of water to each prepared cup. Water the seed every few days. Once the seeds have sprouted and grown into seedlings, let your child plant them

**Tend to the Plants:** If you have plants around the house, give your child a spray bottle filled with water and let him or her water the plants. (A spray bottle offers your child more control than a watering can, and it helps prevent spills.) Provide your child with a soft cloth and let him or her gently clean the leaves of your houseplants. If you have outdoor plants, let your child go outside with the spray bottle and tend them, too!

**Which parts of a plant do we usually eat?** The seed? The fruit? When we eat celery, we are eating the stem of the plant. When we eat spinach or lettuce, we are eating the plant's leaves. We eat the fruit of squash, cucumber and tomato plants. When we eat corn or peas we are eating seeds, and when we eat radish or carrot, we are eating roots. Cauliflower and broccoli plants produce flowers we like to eat. With some plants we eat more than one part.

## Italian Chicken—Sheet Pan Dinner

Cooking Spray  
1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast, cut into cubes  
1 (10 ounce) package frozen broccoli  
4 potatoes, diced  
¼ cup butter, melted  
1 (.7 ounce) package dry Italian Dressing mix

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Spray a 13x9-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Spread chicken pieces, broccoli, and potatoes into the prepared baking dish, respectively. Drizzle melted butter over ingredients in the dish and season with the Italian dressing mix.
3. Bake in preheated oven until the chicken is cooked through and potatoes are tender, 45 to 60 minutes.

Per Serving (4 servings): 423 calories; protein 30g; carbohydrates 43.1g; fat 14.7g; cholesterol 95.1mg; sodium 963mg  
<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/241287/baked-italian-chicken-dinner/>