

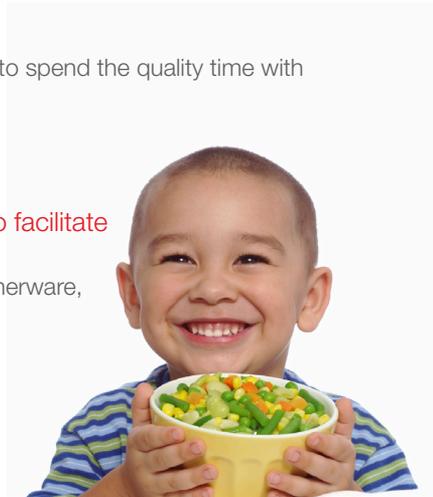
5 Strategies to Promote a Positive Mealtime Environment



Mealtimes at home are a great chance to reinforce your efforts as parents to teach your children healthy eating habits. Sitting down together to eat a meal may sound like a quaint notion from a different time but it is an opportunity to help bring a family together for a healthy meal and positive interaction. Remove the distractions, PDA's, and turn off TVs to be together over a healthy meal. The benefits will stretch beyond just the healthy eating choices; it can create an association in your children's minds of positive social moments to connect as a family. This is an association that will extend into good habits later as an adult.

Try the following **FIVE** strategies to promote a positive mealtime environment in your home:

- 1** Provide a calm atmosphere during meals by avoiding distractions
 - Avoid non-meal related activities
 - Turn off the television
 - Remove toys from the table
- 2** Give your child enough time to eat
 - Set aside an adequate time for yourself to spend the quality time with your child so you are not in a rush
- 3** Provide age-appropriate equipment to facilitate self-feeding behaviours
 - Use smaller utensils, non-breakable dinnerware, and a bib
 - Seat child in a high chair or booster



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4 Eat together as a family.

This will demonstrate that mealtime is not about “me” or a chore but rather a social event that everyone looks forward to

5 Engage the child(ren) in positive interactions by creating family conversations.

Be sure to include everyone regardless of their ages. Some ideas for conversations could be:

- How was your day?
- What did you learn today?
- “What was the worst part of your day?” followed by “What was the best part of your day?”. This will help to end meal conversations on a positive note
- Ask them to participate in meal planning. Have them suggest one item from each food group and try to include at least one of their suggestions for the next meal. Not only does this allow children to think about what they are eating but they will be less likely to reject something if they feel they were part of the decision-making process

The intended results of implementing these simple mealtime strategies may not be immediate but certainly over time and with a consistent effort, you will be on your way to promoting a positive mealtime environment.