



WEEK 3

Increase Family Bonds



WHAT WE'LL DO

This week we encourage you to focus less on the food and prioritize shared family meals for increased family bonds, enhanced social skills, and increased developmental skills. Over time, shared family meals can lead to profound impacts on your child's development. Meal time routines offer uninterrupted opportunities for children to practice turn taking, foster connections with family members, allow for new learning (new vocabulary and new topics), increase practice of appropriate social skills, and improve listening skills. Mealtimes allow learning to be done in a natural and enjoyable way.

SET THE MOOD

Make the table an inviting place to come. Ideas include lighting a candle or slightly dimming the lights, setting the table nicely, include fancier napkins, or playing soft background music. You may also include children in setting the table to help build a sense of responsibility and ownership in the process. Avoid distractions like smart phones, TVs, and devices at the table.

MAKING CONVERSATION

Have a few open ended questions in mind to help get the conversation going. Included are a few ideas for questions to help keep the table talking and listening to one another.

[Questions to Ask at the Dinner Table](#)

[Dinner Table Conversation Starters](#)

Every "body" feels hunger differently and it takes time to learn our individual body's hunger cues.

**How does your body tell you you're hungry?
How is it the same or different than your child?**

AT A GLANCE

FAMILY MEALTIME CHALLENGES

- Week 1: Explore New Food
- Week 2: Family Meal Structure
- **Week 3: Increase Family Bonds**
- Week 4: Kids in the Kitchen
- Week 5: Pulling It All Together

DINNER DEMONSTRATION EVENTS

Late February or early March dates to be determined based upon final registration preferences of participants.

TEACH HUNGER CUES: TALK ABOUT FEELING HUNGRY

- Does your stomach "growl?"
- What does it sound like?
- What does it feel like?
- Do you feel dizzy?
- Do your hands start to shake?
- Is it hard to concentrate on what you're doing?





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KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

A good conversation is like a good tennis match where each person takes turns sharing and responding to information in a balanced way. Sometimes our children are not ready for lots of back and forth conversation. If that's the case, even if words are not being used, here are some ideas to build toward taking conversational turns:

- **Parents narrate the meal.** “Oh my chicken looks crispy. Let’s look at yours.” Together you can feel the food as you describe and talk about items on the plate. While eating, you may describe each step of eating “Oh this carrot is crunchy. Crunch. Crunch crunch. I love eating orange food. Do you have an orange food on your plate?” The parent may use their five senses to help describe each food item.
- **Offer choices.** Would you like milk or juice with dinner? Which food do you want to try first? If the child simply picks up the food to eat, you can then narrate “Oh you chose the French Fry.”
- **Sing a song to start or end the meal.** The song “Here we go round the mulberry bush” lends itself well to other lyrics. “Now we are going to set the table, set the table, set the table. Now we are going to set the table, right now for dinner.” You can get creative with this!

SCHEDULES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Kids will eat best when their mealtimes are predictable. You can make a chart or visuals to help eliminate grazing and follow a schedule.

Many families feel their child only grazes, making mealtime challenging. The child may not want to sit at the table for a meal when they don't feel hungry. Children need the opportunity to learn to feel hungry and understand their body's cues. Teaching your child hunger cues allows (see questions on page 1) for reacting to hunger vs other feelings like sadness or boredom. Below is a suggested schedule as created by Melanie Potock:

- **Breakfast Time** at start of the day
- **Mid Morning snack** after 2-2.5 hours
- **Lunch** time after 2-2.5 hours
- **Midafternoon snack** after 2-2.5 hours
- **Dinner** after 2-2.5 hours



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