

Meal Time

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1

Set the scene. Encourage your kids to treat mealtimes as a time to enjoy each other. No phones, TV, fighting, or even talking about things that you know will lead to a fight. Set the expectation that your kids will be pleasant participants in table conversation. Once they are old enough to understand this expectation, if they are not able to follow it then they don't get the privilege of having that meal with the family. Be consistent in this expectation!

2

Let go of the desire to please everyone with every thing. Plan to serve one or two foods that you know everyone will eat (think a bowl of bread, pasta, or rice). The rest of the meal can be a new food or just one that YOU want to eat. Your goal is to teach your kids the skill of learning to push themselves to try new foods. Providing them an out with a food they like allows them to feel safe and supported as they learn the skills to accept foods they may not know. Provide the food, but do not pressure them to eat it. It is ok if they decide at that meal they only want the safe food.

3

No substitutions! Giving alternate main dishes, either by making something else for your kids or allowing them to have something like a peanut butter sandwich, tells them that you don't expect them to build the skill of liking new foods. Do not make a point of whether they eat the main dish or not. Set up the expectation that you provide one meal, and there will always be a safe food for them to have if they do not want it.

4

Give snacks! Kids aren't equipped to go for long periods between meals. This includes after dinner as well as between meals. Depending on the age of your child, plan 2-3 scheduled snacks everyday, with one of those being after dinner. Think of them as mini meals, not junk. Provide filling snacks to help them make it to the next meal. Scheduling snacks gives structure to when they eat during the day. Do not have snacks be contingent on whether they eat their meal. Believe it or not, this can help them to be better eaters at meal time, not worse!