



MONTHLY PARENTING TIP FROM THE ACFC

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Healthy Eating-A Family Affair

Healthy eating habits and a healthy lifestyle is something every family should practice and enjoy. However, in today's hectic environment many families find it hard to take the time to plan healthy meals or the time for the physical activity needed to maintain a healthy body. With some imagination and creativity you can make learning about healthy eating and exercise a family affair. How many times do we eat foods without learning the nutritional value of or what the contents really are? Try these steps to becoming an educated, healthy family.

1- Become Educated Consumers - It's important to read food labels to find which products are the most nutritious and economical. Labels like "multi-grain", "low-fat", or "sugar free" don't always tell the whole story. Many food manufacturers are now offering lower-sugar versions of favorite cereals and products with no trans-fat. There are available a number of easy-to-use, inexpensive books that identify the "healthy" choices vs. the "unhealthy" choices in foods according to category and even brand. Take these books with you to the grocery store and make a game of hide-and-seek with your children to find the right choice.

2- Family Planning Meeting - Hold a short weekly family meeting to discuss family member schedules and determine what meals will work best for each day and how to plan ahead to avoid last minute stops at fast-food restaurants. Make it a family project to learn current healthy eating guidelines and terms. Assign each member with a term or definition that they can research and report back on at the next meeting. Learning healthy choices at a young age can start a lifetime pattern to eating well and maintaining a healthy weight in children.

3- Make Food Fun – Get children involved in planning meals by letting them help pick out fruits and vegetable by color and texture. This is a great way to teach small children colors, size and texture. The more input they have into the ingredients of a meal the more likely they will be to eat foods they would otherwise refuse.

4- Every Day A Little Play – Whether it's tossing a ball, taking a walk, or just some plain roughhousing, it's important to take time for fun. Each day set some time away from the TV, video games and computers to just play and exert some energy. Not only will this help keep your family active, but you will find it enriches your relationship with your kids and makes the discipline and problem-solving much easier.

5- Take Care of the Caregiver – Good health and stress management are essential to parents as caregivers. Maintaining a healthy weight, exercising and eating a balanced diet are just some of the ways you can keep yourself at your best. Lack of sleep, over-eating and stress can make you respond to family issues in a reactive, rather than an active way, and cause tension among family members.

Start today to make healthy eating, exercise and play a family affair in your home. When you look each day at that picture of your family on your desk, feel confident that those smiles will last for many years to come because of the choices you make today.

Learn more about avoiding power struggles and other ways to develop courage, responsibility and character in your children by joining an Active Parenting Online Group. This six-week, video-based interactive class is being offered free to CWA represented employees in DE, MD, PA, NJ, VA, WV, Washington, DC, or can be purchased at a discounted rate for non-CWA represented employees.

Visit ACFCcares.com for more information and to register for the next available group.