

Make mealtime more than a pitstop

Mealtime is like a pit stop in many households, where children pull up to a table or bench for a quick bite before resuming their activities.

Eating can be a fantastic social experience that benefits the whole family rather than a refueling exercise. Sharing a meal provides an opportunity for parents and children to talk, exchange views, swap news and maybe have a laugh or two.

Meals have the advantage of anchoring children to one spot long enough to hold a conversation.

If you have very young children the notion of sharing a long leisurely meal maybe a little far-fetched. But it is worth persevering as family mealtimes can be the glue that binds children and parents together.

School-aged children, who have a great deal to share, are more than capable of making mealtime a great social event. Adolescents, in particular, often appreciate a forum where they can air their views.

If your family is pressed for time schedule in at least one night a week where you can enjoy a meal

together and guard this time jealously.

Sometimes the meal table can turn into a battlefield as parents nag children to take one more bite or eat all the vegetables. Avoid fighting with children who refuse to eat. However, they shouldn't be permitted to eat a snack following their meal.

Mealtime is an opportunity for parents to listen rather than do all the talking. If your children are conversational clams ask questions that spark some conversation.

In an era when, it seems everyone is busy, a shared mealtime with the television off maybe the best regular investment you can make to your family well-being.



Vitamins for parents

Some conversation starters to use at the dinner table:

1. Ask open-ended questions. For instance, "What was the best thing that happened at school today?"
2. Take the lead and talk about your day. What were the highs and lows? Did you encounter any problems?
3. Talk about an area of interest for each child.

Bright idea



A night out at home

Do something different to impress on your family that meals are an occasion to be enjoyed rather than something to be consumed between activities. Be creative and turn a meal into a special event. Dust off the best knives and forks and set the table in style complete with serviettes and candles. Try serving from the table or even waiting 'restaurant-style' on your family.

Wise & Witty Words

"To the world you might be one person, but to one person you just might be the world."

Unknown

"What a father says to his children is not heard by the world: but it will be heard by posterity."

Jean Paul Richter

Quick Parenting Quiz

1. **A parent who wants to promote responsibility when a child leaves his lunch at home would:**

- a) Take the lunch to school
- b) Call the school and ask if their child could be given some lunch
- c) Do nothing
- d) Call a cab to take the lunch to school

2. **A recent study found that fathers thought the most important task was being a good provider.**

True or false

Answers:

1 c) 2 False (Over the 50% of fathers believe the most important part of being a dad was 'being there' for kids.)