

# TOP 5 TIPS FOR FOOD COMMUNICATION

## Normalize Trying New Foods (Again and Again!)

Encourage the frame that anyone may need to try a food 12 times before they know if they like it. Even adults find out that they like food later in life because they try it prepared a different way!

## Let Kids Decide What They Like

Adults are not experts in what children like. We cannot assume that all children like certain foods and do not like others. For example, do not speak on behalf of a child or indicate that there are certain foods they may not like. Overly restrictive or overly pressured food environments can both have negative effects.

## Practice Table Skills Outside of Mealtimes

Table skills can be a super fun activity that can be practiced outside of mealtimes. For example, learning how to fold a napkin, pour water, and use utensils to transfer smaller toys can all increase the confidence children have during mealtimes. This confidence can increase their ability to be interested in the food itself that is offered.

## Create a Calm, Family-Style Mealtime

Create a positive food environment with plenty of time for eating. Family style meals are one of the best ways to increase vegetable intake. This can replicate the power of family meals at home by offering an environment where interactions over the table enhance the child's community.

## Be the Role Model Kids Need

Adults have an opportunity to model healthy eating and tell stories about their favorite nutrient dense foods. Drinking sugary coffee drinks or soda drinks while children are discouraged to do the same thing creates an insincere environment. Children want to replicate what their caregivers are doing!

### References:

- Erinosh, T. O., Hales, D. P., McWilliams, C. P., Emunah, J., & Ward, D. S. (2012). Nutrition policies at child-care centers and impact on role modeling of healthy eating behaviors of caregivers. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 112(1), 119–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2011.08.048>
- Mahmood, L., Flores-Barrantes, P., Moreno, L. A., Manios, Y., & Gonzalez-Gil, E. M. (2021). The influence of parental dietary behaviors and practices on children's eating habits. *Nutrients*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13041138>