

The Ever Growing Importance of Meal Planning and Family Dinner Hour

What has happened to us? There once was a time when we would all come home from school or work and sit down with our families and enjoy the ritual of family mealtime. It was the best meal of the day, offering a wide variety of nutrition and family conversation.

Today, less than half of American families eat dinner together and when they do, these meals last less than 20 minutes and are lacking in proper nutrition. The fact is our life styles have changed from those magical days of Ozzie and Harriet. Thanks to the Internet, cell phones and palm pilots, business is conducted on an almost 24/7 basis. Even conversations with our children are often times through text messages or cell phone. Sporting events and outside activities for children have become almost maniacal in the demands made upon the family. It has become a race against time so that we can fit it all in. Something has to give, and that unfortunately has been the family dinner hour.

When we squeeze out the family dinner we sacrifice more than you could ever imagine. According to a study conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, the children that dined regularly with their families were 31 per cent less likely to smoke, drink or take drugs and do better in school.

Healthy self-esteem for children can be built around a family dinner table. Parents can take the time to listen and help their children sort out the struggles of the day without interference of phones, tv's and computers.

Our hectic life styles only give time for overly processed foods or even worse "fast foods." This poor nutrition has resulted in children contracting what was once considered "adult diseases" at an alarming rate. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and obesity all stem from poor nutrition and processed foods.

Not only is the family dinner hour a great time to catch up on each other's lives, it also offers more tangible benefits. Family dinner hour can improve grades at school and promote a richer vocabulary. Younger family members that do not have the interaction of speaking within the family group often struggle with poor communication skills. In troubling times such as these, the routine of a family meal helps to ease tensions and frustrations of teens and young children by receiving guidance and assurance through other family members.

Planning these meals, shopping for the ingredients, and to a lesser extent, cooking the dinners, is a time consuming task. In many cases, time needed for both professional careers and for the children's extra-curricular activities make it nearly impossible to coordinate the family dinner. However, now more than ever, it is important to invest this time. The dividends are worth the effort. Today, make your family feel special. Prepare a nutritious meal and sit down to a family dinner. Find out what is up with your children and make the time to talk with each one. Unplug the world and plug into your children for one hour ever day.

About the Author

Sue Koza is Co-Owner of DinnerPlanner.com. Providing busy familys with meal planning solutions. <http://www.dinnerplanner.com>

Source: www.isnare.com

Source: <http://articles.exospy.com>