



Helping Your Child Bloom at Mealtimes

Warmer weather is on the way and for many families that means picnics, barbeques, and family gatherings! Some children become anxious about the new expectations placed on them during these seasonal meals. The smells, colors, sounds, and new tastes can be overstimulating. Here are a few strategies to keep your meal full of sunshine.

Let your child know what to expect.

Set your child up for success by letting them know the details. Where are they going? Where will they sit? What foods will be offered? Who will be there? Giving this information in the days leading up to the event will allow your child to think about and predict what is going to happen.

Make it fun.

Give your child a job to do to help prepare the dish. It could be as simple as getting the ingredients together or starting a timer. Have your child help decorate the table or allow them to use their favorite plates or cups.

Talk to family members first.

Let family members who are not frequently around your child during meals know that your child is learning about eating at family mealtimes. Communicate with them what the meal can look like for your child. Share ideas about maintaining your child's normal eating schedule, offering preferred foods, reading your child's cues, and keeping the pressure off when it comes to trying new foods.

Mealtime interactions.

Keep the pressure off. Have your child serve the foods. Allow them to choose if they want to taste something or prefer to just look at or smell the food. It is ok to offer, but not force. When trying a new food, keep the portion size small.

Whether you are going to the beach, the park, or just the back yard, remember this is a different eating environment for your child. Planting the seeds for new experiences and focusing on having fun will lead to sprouting success with your child's eating.