The Family Who Eats Together, Stays Together

Come and get it! With sports practice and work schedules, rounding up the troops for an evening meal can be almost impossible! However, research shows that eating as a family has great benefits for your children and teenagers. Here are 8 more reasons why you should try to sit down together 5-6 times a week, whether for breakfast, lunch or dinner!

#1: Communication: Mealtime provides the family opportunities to bond, connect, and learn from one another. It’s a chance to share information and give extra attention to your child. Family meals foster warmth, security, love, & feelings of belonging.

#2: Model Manners (and more): Family mealtime is the perfect opportunity to model appropriate table manners, meal etiquette, and social skills. Keep the mood light, relaxed, and loving. Lead by example.

#3: Expand Their World...One Food at a Time: Encourage your child to try new foods. It expands your child’s knowledge, experience, and skill. It can take 8-10 exposures to a new food before it is accepted, so be patient.

#4: Nutrition: Meals prepared at home are usually more nutritious and healthy. They contain more fruits, vegetables, dairy products and nutrients such as fiber, calcium, and vitamins A and C.

#5: Learning to be Self-Sufficient: Basic cooking and food preparation are necessities for being self-sufficient. Involve your family. Preschoolers can tear lettuce, cut bananas, and set the table. Older children can pour milk, peel vegetables, and mix batter. Working as a team creates a learning experience AND puts the meal on the table faster.

#6: Prevent Destructive Behaviors: Research shows that 5-6 family a week are associated with lower rates of smoking, drinking, and illegal drug use in pre-teens and teenagers when compared to families that eat together 2 or fewer times a week. Even with complicated schedules, it is important to make an effort to eat meals together.

#7: Improve Grades: Children who eat dinner 4 or more times per week with their families have higher academic performance compared with children who eat with their families 2 or fewer times per week.

#8: Save Money: Meals purchased away from home cost two to four times more than meals prepared at home. It is time to bring the "family" back to the dinner table.

Sharing dinner together gives everyone a sense of identity. It can help ease day-to-day conflicts, as well as establish traditions and memories that can last a lifetime!
MANAGING STRESS from Childwelfare.Gov

Everyone has stress, whether it’s a bad day at work, car trouble, or simply too many things to do. A build-up of stress also can contribute to health problems, including allergies, a sore neck or back, headaches, upset stomach, and high blood pressure. Too much stress can make it hard to parent effectively. After a while, your child may show signs of being stressed out, too! It is important to learn how to manage your stress— for your own sake and for your child. The following suggestions may help:

What You Might Be Feeling from Stress: Feeling angry, irritable or hopeless a lot of the time, having trouble making decisions, crying easily or worrying all the time, arguing with friends or your partner, overeating or not eating enough, or being unable to sleep or wanting to sleep all the time.

What You Can Do to Manage Your Stress:
Identify what’s making you stressed. Everyone’s stressors are different. Yours might be related to money, work, your surroundings (traffic, crime), your partner or child’s behavior, or health issues.
Accept what you cannot change. Ask yourself, “Can I do anything about it?” If the answer is no, try to focus on something else. If there is something you can do, break it into smaller steps so it doesn’t feel overwhelming.
Have faith. Look back at previous times when you have overcome challenges. Think, “This too shall pass.”
Relax! Try deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or listening to music. Take 30 minutes to play a board game and laugh with your kids.
Take care of your health. Getting enough sleep can make a big difference in your stress level. So can eating healthy foods and getting some exercise.
Take time for yourself. Take a bath, read a book, or pick up a hobby. Hire a babysitter (or trade time with a friend or neighbor) and get out for a few hours.
Develop a support network. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Older children can set the table. Your spouse or partner could take over bedtime a few nights a week. Friends might pick up the kids from school to give you a break.

VPK 2016-2017 Registration is taking place now. Please turn your voucher in no later than March 30th to secure your spot. Child must be 4 years old by September 1, 2016 in order to enroll. To get your voucher you will need to go to www.elclc.org.