



Eat, Laugh, Talk! The Family Dinner Playbook

Family Dinner Project

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Eat, Laugh, Talk! is a comprehensive mealtime guide for parents.

Aiming to bring the whole family together for a healthy, home-cooked meal, the text sparks ideas for food and fun. It throws out perfectionism in favor of “ease, affordability, taste, and versatility.” This approach celebrates small victories, like a toddler taking two bites of vegetables, and holds realistic expectations about challenges like technology, co-parenting, picky eaters, and children who respond to questions about their days with “fine.”

Straightforward, delicious recipes boast short ingredient lists whose items are readily available in grocery stores. Their instructions are direct and they involve short preparation times. They presume basic kitchen skills. Tasty, nutritious options for every course include Pineapple Sundaes, Lentil Sloppy Joes, and Curry Vegetable Dip.

Sections about feeding groups and adapting recipes to dietary needs are also helpful, while the suggested games and conversation starters are adaptable to a wide variety of ages. They include “Would you rather...?” and a joke jar kept on the table, and range from lighthearted but meaningful to more serious. The book suggests involving children in the meal process, helping them to feel engaged and, hopefully, making cajoling them into eating and interacting less necessary. Insights on resolving mealtime conflicts are particularly useful.

This work is supported by research into the bountiful benefits of family meals, which include better physical health, greater emotional and mental health, and better educational outcomes. Beautiful photos of food and diverse families help in envisioning these proposed family meals.

Brimming with commonsense wisdom, *Eat, Laugh, Talk!* paints an attainable picture of enjoyable family meals.

MELISSA WUSKE (November / December 2019)

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