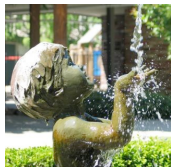
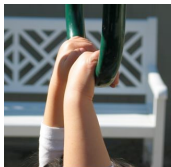
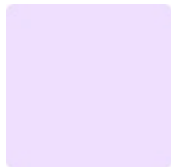




Pearls for Parents

FRC Bi-weekly Newsletter
October 29, 2009



Parenting Pearl #1: Something to ponder...

Making Dinnertime Family Time

Getting together for mealtimes can be a very challenging task. The leisurely family dinners of the past are a distant memory and no longer a sacred ritual as the evening routine has become busier. These days dinnertime is often just a quick pit-stop before the next activity. Children eat at different times than parents to accommodate for different schedules. Parents struggle with making healthy and easy meals while juggling different eating preferences and nutritional needs. But even though it is not easy to make family dinners a priority, the long-term benefits may be well worth the effort! Sitting down at the table together is one of the best ways for families to grow and stay connected on a regular basis. This family "routine" can also build a strong family identity and provide kids with a sense of stability and security. Studies show that kids who eat dinner with their family at least 5 nights a week are healthier, more emotionally stable, get better grades, and are less likely to be involved in risk-taking behavior.

An article in Time Magazine was written about the magic of the family meal: "There is something about a shared meal- not some holiday blowout, not once in a while but regularly, reliably- that anchors a family even on nights when the food is fast and the talk cheap and everyone has someplace else they'd rather be. And on those evenings when the mood is right and the family lingers, caught up in an idea or an argument explored in a shared safe place where no one is stupid or shy or ashamed, you get a glimpse of the power of this habit and why social scientists say such communion acts as a kind of vaccine, protecting kids from all manner of harm."

If it's challenging for your family to make it to the dinner table during the weekday, breakfast or lunch may have the same value. Just remember to turn off the TV, let the phone go unanswered, pull up some chairs and take advantage of the opportunity to connect with your family. Allow it to be a time to slow down and enjoy each other's company while sharing a meal together.

(tip source: www.life.familyeducation.com)

Parenting Pearl #2: Something to do

Ideas for making mealtime enjoyable for the whole family:

Questions in the Jar

Reconnect with your family at mealtime by playing this fun question game: on separate slips of paper write different open-ended questions that are appropriate for the ages your children (i.e. What is the best thing about being your age? What would be a perfect day for you? Who is your favorite friend and why? If you could have any animal as a pet, which would you choose? If you had three wishes, what would they be? For more question ideas [click here](#)). Put the slips of paper in a container and place on the dinner table. Have family members take turns picking slips and answering questions. In no time, there will be a lively, pleasant conversation at the table. (tip source: *The Siblings' Busy Book*)

Theme Dinners

A costume party at dinner is fun for kids of all ages. Pick an easy theme- it doesn't have to be fancy or complicated (royal, barnyard, beach, princess, teddy bear, backwards, circus, etc)- and have your children (if they are old enough) be in charge of choosing the props and costumes to wear at dinner (a simple crown or hat could work). They can even make invitations for the special dinner. (tip source: www.paintedgold.com)

"Just-Because" Celebrations

Celebrate random things at dinner (i.e. the first day of summer, a lost tooth, the dog's birthday, etc). Have your children make decorations, bring out the party hats, make fancy drinks, turn on the music, and have a great time. (tip source: www.redbookmag.com)

Let the Kids Help Out

Include your children in the dinner prep. Give them mini aprons and have them become your "assistant chefs." Children can have fun helping with the meals and will have even more fun tasting the results of their hard work. Kitchen tasks that kids can do: Measuring and

pouring dry ingredients; washing fruits and vegetables; spreading butter and other spreads; rolling dough into balls; greasing pan with fingers; arranging items on a baking sheet; mixing; setting the table; etc. You can also have a Kid's Meal Night and have them choose the menu: have them pick from a list of suggestions or allow them to look through recipe books. When families prepare meals together, kids learn responsibility and become team members. Kids are also more likely to try foods that they have helped prepare! (*tip source:*

www.redbookmag.com)

For more ideas on how to make dinnertime easier and more fun for your family, click on the following [article](#).

Teacher's Corner



Linda Wood

3's Teacher,
4's Puppets Teacher,
Plays piano for Children's
Center Sings

I've been working at the Children's Center for:

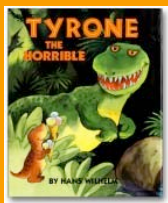
11 years
(since the beginning)

My Fun Fact:

I teach piano to 34 children
and I love it

My Favorite Children's Book:

Tyrone the Horrible
by Hans Wilhelm



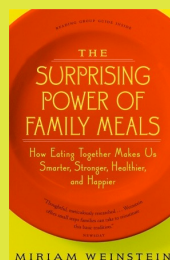
Reading Corner

Books on Dinnertime:

Featured Book:

The Surprising Power of
Family Meals: How
Eating Together Makes
Us Smarter, Stronger,
Healthier and Happier

by Miriam Weinstein



Check out this book if you want to be inspired to bring back the ritual of family dinners. Miriam Weinstein strongly believes that regular family meals are important to the health and well-being of our children. She gives reasons why having dinner together can help create and strengthen your family culture as well as practical strategies for making mealtime a priority for your family. Even though a shared meal is no longer expected in our society Miriam argues that supper is a daily treat we should give ourselves. It is more than just the act of eating. "Supper is about nourishment of all kinds." It is about establishing, enjoying, and maintaining your family ties.

Other Books:

Discover Dinnertime: Your Guide to Building Family
Time Around the Table by Susan Dosier

Feed Me, I'm Yours: Delicious, Nutritious, and Fun
Things You Can Cook Up For Your Kids by Vicki
Lansky

Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense by
Ellyn Satter

For a list of other books in the FRC library [click here](#).

Dates to Remember

Thursday Oct 29, 2009

Halloween Performances:
10am and 2pm

Friday Oct 30, 2009

Halloween Performances:
10am and 2pm

Tuesday Nov 10, 2009

Kindergarten Readiness Panel
7pm in Creekside Center

Wednesday Nov 11, 2009

School Closed: Veterans Day

Wednesday Nov 18, 2009

Coffee with Non: Fall Placement
and Kindergarten Readiness
9am in Redwood Room

Websites to Check Out

www.dinewithoutwhine.com

"Helping families re-discover the pleasure of the dinner hour"

www.deelishmeals.com

a local company that provides meal kits for busy families

www.poweroffamilymeals.com

Helpful mealtime tips and family recipes

Words to Inspire

"As a child my family's menu consisted of two choices- take it or leave it"

-Buddy Hackett



This email was sent to you by:

The Family Resource Center

Children's Center Preschool at Los Altos United Methodist Church

655 Magdalena Ave, Los Altos, CA 94024 www.childrenscenterpreschool.org

[Archives](#): link to past newsletters