

RANDOM BITS FROM THE FAMILY DINNER BY LAURIE DAVID

- ❖ The recent study “Household Routines and Obesity in U.S. Preschool-Aged Children” by Sarah E. Anderson, PhD, and Robert C. Whitaker, MD, found that kids as young as four already have a lower risk for obesity if they had three basic routines in their family life:
 - FAMILY DINNER
 - ADEQUATE SLEEP
 - LIMITED WEEKDAY TV VIEWING

- ❖ “Adolescents enjoy eating meals with their families and feel they eat healthier when they eat more often with them.” Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, PhD, Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota.

- ❖ Family dinner acts as a motivator, a deterrent, and a safety net. [If you] interact with one another every night, no one can get too upset, depressed, or confused without someone in the family noticing. And that gives [the family] a chance to help and be helped when it’s needed.

- ❖ “A meal is about civilizing children. It’s about teaching them to become a member of their culture.” Robin Fox, PhD, professor of social theory at Rutgers University.

- ❖ “Children who feel listened to, become better able to listen to others.” Ellen Galinsky, president of the Families and Work Institute and author of Mind in the Making.

- ❖ “The dinner table is the center for the teaching and practicing not just of table manners but of conversation, consideration, tolerance, family feeling, and just about all the other accomplishments of polite society except the minuet.” Judith Martin (Miss Manners), writer and etiquette authority.

- ❖ “At dinner, when parents sit down at the table. they are generally focusing on the wrong things. They focus on how much food the child is putting into their mouth. They miss the opportunity to have a connecting, joyful experience, to listen to their children and engage in a shared dialogue. When a parent gets overly involved with how much food their child is eating, children usually eat less. They don’t want to eat because the parent is trying to *make* them eat. It’s a classic power struggle between the parent and the child, and guess who usually wins? Eating is your child’s job. Your job is to provide healthy, tasty food. What and how much they are eating is not a worthy topic of your dinner conversation.” Mary Hartzell, a child development specialist, author and preschool director.

- ❖ “We have done research showing that even kids as young as two are more willing to try something new if they observe an adult trying it. Dinner provides all sorts of modeling opportunities, like portion size, food sampling, etc.” Leann Birch, PhD, distinguished professor of human development, Penn State University.