



HEALTHY KIDS
THUNDER BAY



Thunder Bay District
Health Unit



Phrases that Help Or Hinder

As a caregiver, you have a big impact on your child's eating behaviours. Here's some examples of how to turn common meal time phrases into more positive phrases that help children develop healthy eating habits.

Instead of...



"Jonny, look at your sister, she ate all her carrots"

Phrases like this teach children to ignore their bodies' sense of fullness.

"No dessert until you eat your vegetables"

Phrases like this make some foods (e.g. dessert) seem better than others (e.g. vegetables). Studies show this can actually make kids like dessert more and like vegetables less. It can also encourage children to eat for reasons other than hunger.

"Just try taking one bite"

Phrases like this make children feel pressured to eat and may teach children to eat for your approval.

Try...

"Is your stomach telling you that you're full?"

"Is your stomach still making its hungry growling noise?"

Phrases like this help children to notice when they are hungry and full and eat according to their body's cues.

"It's ok if you don't like ____ (vegetable) yet, we can try them another time. What colours or patterns do you notice on ____ (vegetable)?"

Phrases like this help children to take interest in vegetables without the pressure to eat more than they want.

"This corn is so sweet"

"This cauliflower looks like little trees"

Phrases like these focus on the sensory qualities (sight, taste, smell, touch) of food. They encourage children to take interest in and try eating new foods.

When your child says...



"This tastes yucky"

"I don't want to eat this"

"I'm not hungry"

Try...

"I see that you don't like this food yet. That's okay. Can you use a different word to describe how it tastes? Is it sweet? Sour? Bitter?"

"It's okay if you want to eat it right now. You can still explore it. Would you like to take one to touch and smell?"

"That's okay, you're listening to your body. It's good to know when your stomach tells you it is hungry and when it is full"

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