

DO THIS AND AVOID THAT

Regulating Children's Emotions through Food

What we know:

- Using food to regulate emotions teaches children to handle negative emotions through food and may lead to emotional eating.
- **Emotional eating** refers to using food to regulate bad moods. It is linked to increased risk of children being **overweight** and developing **eating disorders**.

Avoid This

- Offering food to regulate children's emotions (e.g., boredom, anxiety, or sadness).
- Cheering up children with food and using food as your "fix" to a bad day.

Do This

- Help children label their feelings and give them coping strategies
- Play a favorite game or puzzle
- Eat lunch outdoors/ have a picnic
- Dance to child's favorite music
- Offer comforting hugs

Food as a Reward

What we know:

- Using food-based rewards can often lead to children **over consuming sugar and fat foods**.
- Children may not learn how to **self-regulate** but instead eat when they are not hungry as a reward.

Avoid This

Offering food to children as a reward or punishment.

Do This

- Have children identify how they know when they are truly hungry
- Offer kind words and praise
- Play with favorite toy
- Read a book of the child's choosing
- Give non-food items: like stickers, pencils, or coloring sheets

Screen Time during Meals

What we know:

- Screen time may cause the following: mood problems, **less time spent with family and friends**, body image issues, lower GPA, sleep problems, low physical activity, and/or **weight problems**.

Avoid This

Using screens during meals (e.g., phones, TVs, computers, and tablets).

Do This

- Eat meals at a table away from televisions and computers.
- Turn off televisions and computers while eating.
- Have a designated space away from the table for phones and iPads during mealtimes.
- Use meals as a time to talk about each other's day.
- Talking during mealtimes is a great way to bond as a family

Celebrations and Holidays with Food

What we know:

- Consumption of unhealthy foods and sugary drinks has been linked to increased risk of **overweight** and **obesity**.

Avoid This

- Serving foods high in sugar and fat such as cookies and chips during celebrations (ex. birthdays, thanksgiving).
- Serving sugar sweetened beverages such as soda during holidays.

Do This

- **Make the foods look engaging:** Cut foods into fun and unique shapes. Add colorful vegetables to dishes.
- **Jazz up your beverages:** Add fruit slices to water, make ice cubes from 100% juice.
- **Mix it up:** Serve fruit kabobs or veggie platters. Use salsa or spicy bean dip.
- **Tweak your sweets:** For dessert serve layered yogurt and fruit for a yummy parfait, baked apples or pears, a colorful fruit salad, or delicious frozen juice bars (made with 100% fruit juice).
- **Spice up your life:** Use recipes that emphasize spices and herbs instead of sugar and salts. Swap out pureed fruits for butter and oil.