

What is Mealtime Emotional Climate?

Mealtime emotional climate (MEC) refers to the level of positive and negative interpersonal interactions and emotional expression during mealtimes¹⁻².

Positive MEC



What a positive MEC looks like²⁻³:

- ❖ Enjoyment and fun (laughing and smiling occurs)
- ❖ Pleasant conversations
- ❖ Family enjoys each other's company
- ❖ High relationship quality
- ❖ Affection and warmth is shown
- ❖ Statements such as "Thank you, this broccoli tastes really good."

Benefits²⁻⁶:

- ❖ Lower BMI/weight status
- ❖ Positive dietary intake (more fruit and vegetable consumption)
- ❖ Less disordered eating behaviors
- ❖ Less anxiety and distress
- ❖ Higher academic scores (reading and vocabulary)

Negative MEC



What a negative MEC looks like²⁻³:

- ❖ Negative emotions expressed
- ❖ Hostile interpersonal dynamics
- ❖ Food lecturing/moralizing
- ❖ Frequent silence
- ❖ Food controlling or restriction
- ❖ Shouting, sarcasm, or criticism
- ❖ Distractions such watching tv or playing on phone/tablet during meals
- ❖ Statements such as "This food looks gross."

Consequences^{3-4,7}:

- ❖ Increased prevalence of child overweight/obesity rates
- ❖ Negative dietary intake (more sodas and sweets consumed)
- ❖ Increased disordered eating behaviors

References

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