

# Encouraging Kids to Have a Healthy Relationship with Food



1

## Food is just food. Avoid labeling foods as “good” or “bad”

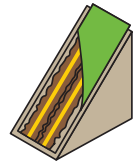
This may cause children to think they are a bad person if they eat a “bad” food. Instead, teach them that all food is fuel and can fit into their diets. One type of food won’t instantly make them healthy or unhealthy.



2

## Ask them questions

Kids naturally know when they are hungry and full. Encourage them to be vocal about how they are feeling by asking questions such as “How does this apple make your stomach feel?” and “Is your tummy still growling?”



3

## Respect their hunger levels

Following the previous tip, respect their hunger/fullness by not encouraging them to clean their plate. This causes them to ignore their natural signs of fullness which can influence their eating habits later in life.



4

## Encourage body neutrality

Body neutrality is the concept of focusing on just how amazing bodies are based solely on their functions. Bodies allow for us to play sports, hug family and so much more. Let them know that they are more than just their body and avoid talking about weight.



5

## Avoid rewarding with food

Rewarding kids with food can influence their eating habits later in life. Instead, try to provide other rewards such as new craft supplies, an extra book at bedtime or playing a favorite game with family.





### Monitor your language about your own body

Kids are very aware of their environment and absorb what happens around them. If they hear others talking negatively about their body, they may start to think those same thoughts about themselves too. Lead by example and avoid using negative language when referring to your body and food selections.



### Focus on joyful movement

When participating in physical activity with kids, keep the focus and attitude on fun instead of weight loss or changing body size. Explain the benefits of physical activity that are not related to weight such as improved mood, heart health and strong bones.



### Celebrate their talents

Body size does not determine worth. Therefore, focus on their non-physical characteristics rather than how their body looks. Are they talented at piano? Are they filled with kindness for their friends/family? Let them know!



### Showcase diverse media images

Use books, TV shows, posters and educational videos that include children with diverse body sizes, shapes and skin colors. By exposing kids to diversity at an early age, this helps them understand that we are all different.



### Involve them in food preparation

Have kids help with gardening, picking food at the grocery store, or preparing meals in the kitchen as this can encourage them to try new foods. This also provides an opportunity for them to ask questions as well as begin conversations about nutrition and making healthy choices.

