

The Importance of Family Dinners

Just a quick survey, how many of you have family dinners together on a regular basis, like 5 times a week

When I said family dinners, I meant dinners where all the family members sitting down together at the same time, turning off the TV, muting the phones, spending time talking with family members while enjoying a good meal.

Mr. Toastmaster, Fellow Toastmasters, and honored guests:

A recent study shows that only 60% of Americans have family dinners together. Families often find it difficult to coordinate their schedules and find time to prepare for dinner. When they have time to eat together, many often are distracted by TV, phone calls, and texting, which make it hard to have a quality family dinner. From what I have seen, a lot of families often have the TV on and everyone would just stare at the TV while eating. There would be minimal conversations during the meal. Some families eat at different times and some just grab a quick bite at a fast food restaurant.

There are three main benefits of having family dinners together. Not only are you going to be healthier, happier, your children tend to do better in school.

First of all, how many of you have eaten fast food when you eat by yourself?

A study from University of Minnesota states that by having family dinners together, we tend to eat more fruits and vegetables, which give us a variety of nutrients and dietary fiber. Other studies have shown that families who eat dinner together tend to drink less soft drink, and eat less fried food. The number of times families have dinner together is shown to positively correlated with the amount of vitamins,

proteins, and calcium intake. So, having family dinners really helps lower the risk of obesity and other eating disorders.

Besides physical health, family dinners also improve mental health. Family dinners help strengthen relationships between family members. The conversation during family dinnertime allows family members to share their stories, express their feelings, and get support from each other. Families who have dinner together tend to have a stronger bonding, a more positive outlook on their future, and the children tend to have better self-esteem and motivation. Families that have dinner together 5 times or more tend to be positive than those who have less.

Lastly, having family dinners help children do better in school. A survey from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University found that children who have 5 or more family meals a week are 40% more likely to get A's and B's than those who have less than 5 family meals. Researchers at Harvard University found that family dinners were even more important to children's language development than having parents who read to them or played with them. Children that are engaged in dinner conversations tend to have better vocabulary and reading ability. They tend to be more social and better at public speaking.

There are many benefits of having family dinners together. So please turn off the TV, mute your cell phones, and just enjoy having a positive conversation during the meal with your families. You will be healthier, happier, and your children will do better in school.