HELLO FROM THE HEALTHY FAMILIES TEAM!

Thank you for helping us better understand parent-child interaction and children’s well-being.

Feeding young kids is stressful! Here are some tips to make mealtimes more relaxed, healthy, and fun:

1) Parents should select the location and timing of meals, along with what food will be served, but let kids select the amount of food they eat. This encourages them to listen to their body’s cues.

2) Present a varied diet in a fun way (broccoli “trees”) and be patient — kids may need to be exposed to a food many times before they accept it. Make tasting new foods a fun game!

3) Limit distractions while kids are eating

4) Make healthy snacks convenient and accessible for kids (sliced veggies in a bag low in the fridge where they can reach)

5) Talk about health; don’t focus on weight

6) Encourage physical activity as a family

7) Try to relax — pressuring kids to eat often leads to conflict and can backfire (kids eat less of what you pressure them to like)

8) Play the long game. Don’t make mealtime a battleground; instead, think about long-term health goals for your kids.

Many thanks to all the families who participated in the Healthy Families Project!

Thanks to you, we were able to gather information from 100 families about their daily experiences and mealtimes interactions. Preliminary analyses have discovered that parents’ perceptions of their feeding practices, challenges they face with their kids at meals, and kids’ eating behaviors vary from one day to the next. No wonder mealtimes feel like a moving target sometimes!

Next, we’ll be examining how stress relates to feeding practices and how various coping skills can be protective for families. We’ll keep you updated on our findings!

Student Spotlight

Olivia Smith (right) and Deyaun Villarreal (left) will be graduating from the University of Texas at Dallas with her PhDs this summer! Olivia and Deyaun have been working at UTD since 2014 and have worked with the Healthy Families Project since the beginning of the project. They will defend their dissertations in the summer. Olivia’s dissertation examines the influence of parenting as a team on marital quality and parent-child conflict. Deyaun’s dissertation examines the influences of daily mood on parent-adolescent communication from the Daily Teen Life Study. Congrats Olivia and Deyaun!