



# Talk Together

Adult Lesson (45 to 60 minutes)

## OVERVIEW

Communication is how we connect with each other. We share our thoughts, feelings and ideas. When we eat together, we also communicate about what we are eating, and that influences food choices and habits for our families. Mealtimes conversation is a great time to connect as a family and model habits for your children.

## ANCHOR

Communication is how we connect with each other. We share our thoughts, feelings, and ideas. When we eat together, we also communicate about what we are eating, and that influences food choices and habits for our families. Communication influences the way a family plans, prepares, and enjoys family meals. Communications influence how we connect with family members at the family table.



*Thinking about your family, how do you start conversations at your family mealtime? Take two minutes to share with the person sitting next to you, and then we will hear some of your responses.*

*Who would share some ideas to start a conversation at meal times?*

Some ideas we have collected: Conversation starters, trivia cards, share favorite book or poem, favorite riddle or joke.

## ADD

Mealtime is a time to share, learn, and have fun as a family. Setting some guidelines for conversation can make mealtime enjoyable for everyone. Mealtime is a time to model healthful eating, manners, and communication skills. This provides children an opportunity to express themselves, practice listening, learn new words, and develop communication skills that will help them throughout their life. Mealtime is more enjoyable if family business or discipline is handled at another time and place. Using guidelines can help create a positive atmosphere, prevent conflict, provide an opportunity to promote compromise, and find new solutions to challenges at mealtime. Work toward creating happy, relaxing conversation at mealtime so that family members look forward to this time together.

By the end of the session, participants will:

- Identify benefits of talking together at mealtime,
- Practice communication skills,
- Identify one communication skill to try at home when planning and preparing family meals.

## MATERIALS

- Chalkboard or whiteboard
- A Guide for Positive Table Talk
- Talk Together Bowl
- Conversation Starters
- Kitchen utensils decorated with a ribbon for small group discussion
- Poster paper
- Two color dots, one for each participant

## HANDOUTS

- Talk Together recipe card
- Talk Together Bowl (if this lesson is not used with the Youth Lesson)
- Conversation Starters (if this lesson is not used with the Youth Lesson)

*Note to Leader: Write the following on poster paper or white board.*

Here are some guidelines for mealtime conversation:

- Take turns talking. One person talks at a time.
- Listen carefully.
- Be open to new ideas.
- Turn off the TV, phone, personal electronic devices, or other distractions.

## APPLY

Like any skill, communication takes practice. Children need to be taught and given opportunity to practice communication skills.



Let's practice communication skills using the guidelines as we about food choices and family meals.



*Ask participants to gather in groups of three to four. Turn off your cell phones! Each group will select a Communication Topic card. Each topic represents an issue related to food and mealtime. Talk together in your groups about the selected topic. Use the communication guidelines. Pass around a kitchen utensil and take turns talking. Listen carefully. Be open to new ideas. You will have 5 minutes for this activity.*

Ask participants:

- How did you feel about this conversation?
- What happened as the conversation developed?
- What guidelines improved this conversation?
- Did you learn any new ideas from your conversation?
- What other guidelines would you recommend for mealtime conversation?

### AWAY

Now it is your turn.



*Write a conversation starter or topic you would like to use at your family meal. We will share in a couple minutes.*



*Who would like to share their conversation starter? Leader writes ideas on board or paper to share with the group and the family session, if scheduled.*

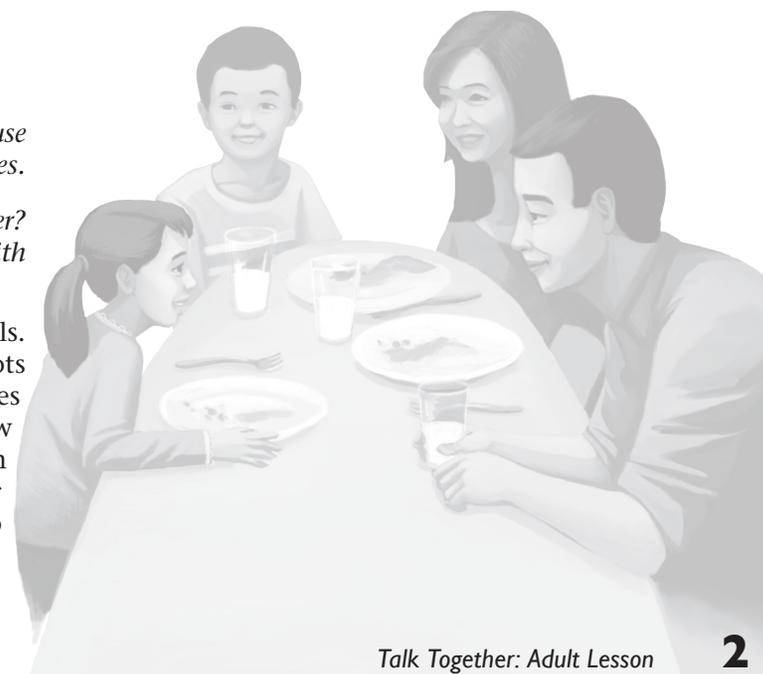
Ask participants to reflect on their communication skills. Hand out two colored dots. Have participants place dots on a poster set up with four communication guidelines (Take Turns Talking, Listen Carefully, Be Open to New Ideas, Turn off Distractions). Place one color dot on the easy communication skill; place the other color dot on the communication skill they would like to practice more.

- When will you use the conversation starters with your family?
- What other ideas will you use to start conversation topics at the family meal?
- Which communication guideline will you practice at home with your families?

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local DSHS Community Service Office.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION



# Talk Together

## COMMUNICATION TOPIC CARDS

Finding time for family meals can be challenging. Explore the challenges and strategies used to plan times to eat together as a family.

When time gets tight, it is tempting to stop on the way home and get fast food or take-out food. Discuss the benefits and barriers to cooking together at home versus getting take-out or fast food.

Everyone has food preferences. Family meals are an opportunity to provide healthy choices for your family. How do you encourage family members to eat a variety of vegetables with their meals?

Everyone has food preferences. Family meals are an opportunity to provide healthy choices for your family. Explore the challenges and strategies to decrease intake of sweetened beverages or increase milk and calcium rich foods.

One way to get the family to the table is to serve foods they enjoy. Explore ways to include the family in planning meals for the week.

Mealtimes conversations can help families bond and connect. Share ideas to start family conversations to make mealtimes a time to learn and have fun as a family.

