



462 West Broad Street
Westfield, New Jersey 07090
(908) 654-5900
www.westfieldlittleschool.com

Making the Most of Mealtime
-Jaci Diamond, MA CCC-SLP

It may seem obvious, but whenever possible *eat with your children*. Parenting has become more complex than ever, and for some of us just getting a meal on the table deserves serious recognition, but mealtime can be an important part of your child's daily routine. Your child may be developing self-care skills, such as learning to use utensils, learning to drink from a cup or straw, or simply expanding their repertoire of foods. Mealtime can also be a very social experience for parents and children, and just like your child's other developmental domains, you are going to be your child's best model during mealtime.

Your child is absorbing everything from his/her environment and notices your reaction when you take a bite of something or choose not to, so remember to try everything on your plate. Often at the end of a long work day, families sit around the dinner table and discuss their day for better or worse. A colleague I worked with used to refer to dinner time as "America's complaint session". She recommended keeping mealtime conversation positive and to keep children engaged, talk about the food specifically. For example, "Look at this broccoli. Don't you think it looks like little trees?"

Toddlers are notorious for "food jags" and they will pass. The research states that it can take up to fifty presentations of a new food before a child may try it, so present, present, present.