

Talking point

Is it important to eat together at the table?

A RECENT survey revealed a third of British families have fewer than half their evening meals together each week.

A study on foodnavigator.com suggested one family meal was as important as five fruit or veg a day.

Wellbeing and lifestyle consultant Yvonne Wake says, "Eating together as a family is paramount.

"A family meal is generally more nutritious as a lot of effort goes into it. The conversation is where everyone gets a chance to explain what happened in their day.

"Children need praise, and sitting at a table is a place where confidence is boosted."

A medicalandgeneral.com article said, "Children eat better and try new foods when they eat with others.

"Eating together can provide health benefits and has been shown to reduce depression and improve self-esteem."

Sophie Radice agrees with the concept. However, in a "Guardian" article, she



called it "hell on earth".

"Toddlers refuse to eat or have tantrums, teenagers can't bear the sound of their brother eating . . . the ten-year-old is tapping his glass with his fork."

In the same article, Susie Orbach, psychotherapist and author of "On Eating" said, "[Family meals] can . . . leave kids and parents irritated. It's worth bringing family together, but . . . a meal can create tension."

Bruce Feiler penned "The Secrets Of Happy Families" and analysed conversation.

He noted there are only about 10 minutes of actual

dinnertime conversation.

"If you can't have family dinner, meet after the kids have done some homework and everybody's home.

"It's family time that's important."

Katja Rowell agrees. In a huffingtonpost.co.uk article, the responsive-feeding specialist said, "Society puts too much on mothers' shoulders.

"I've seen families dreading mealtimes. Start with a focus on enjoying time at the table then seeing what creative ways you can come up with to eat together." ■



"It helps tune the brain into noticing the good things"

Frederika Roberts, Happiness and Wellbeing trainer, author and founder of Educate to Flourish CIC, said, "Eating together can provide valuable opportunities for families to

discuss their day and make future plans. Try asking, 'What went well today?' This helps tune the brain into noticing the good things in life to support good mental health."



"Communication is often improved whilst eating together"

Author Lady Kendall Jaggar said, "Communication is often improved whilst eating together, aligning our taste buds and our palate to the infusion of both flavour and the

ambience found when we eat together around the table. Using facial recognition and our body language whilst engaging with each other allows the daily stresses to ease away."



Here's what you said on the "Friend" Facebook page

CM Lucky to be able to do that. Sadly no longer possible at the moment.

DH It's such a shame this seems to have died out. Family together at the end of the day, sharing a meal and talking about their day is what family life is all about.

JD We should all be grateful that we have the food to eat and share in the first place.

MJ I think it is very important for families to eat together, and for the whole mealtime to be part of the structure of the family, from laying the table to washing up and putting things away.

TC Eating together for family meals (even three or four days a week) develops social skills and vocabulary for children. As adults, it is an important time to share news, socialise and support mental health, as well as encouraging better eating habits. All essential in today's busy world.

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