

THE POWER OF OUR WORDS

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CONTENT NOTE

Adapted from:
Power of Our Words Resource Guide
Arizona WIC of Maricopa County

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Describe how our words can positively impact relationship with food
2. List two ways body-positive and body-neutral affirmations support positive body image
3. Describe how an intentional feeding relationship can support a healthy food and body environment at home

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TWO AREAS



Body



Food

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BACKGROUND INFO

- Definitions:
 - Weight stigma/bias
 - Diet culture
 - Weight inclusive/weight neutral
- With these lenses:
 - All people can be affected
 - Food choices
 - Movement choices

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WHY THIS TOPIC MATTERS

- Children see and hear everything we do
- Opinions about bodies begin to form at 3 years of age
- We can show what a positive relationship with food and body looks and sounds like
- Media influence
- Friends and family

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BODY-FOCUSED COMMENTS

"She is way too skinny"

"He is so short"

"Wow, have you lost weight?"

"I wish I had your figure"

"Looks like your child has a big appetite"

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AFFIRMATIONS

- Saying positive words regularly can:
 - Help change how we think
 - Change our behaviors
 - Increase confidence and mood
- Our bodies are amazing!
- Our bodies help us to experience all that life has to offer

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"I am grateful to be me"

"I matter"

"I can be whatever I want to be"

"I can accomplish anything I set my mind to"

"My feelings are important"

"I have a great heart"

"I am proud of myself"

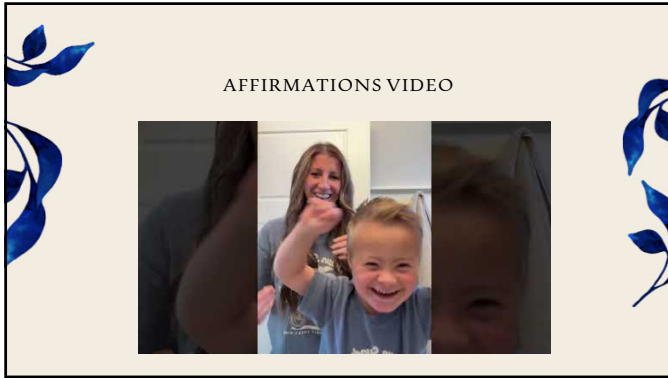
"I will do great things today"

"I am a good friend"

"I am worthy of love"

NON-PHYSICAL AFFIRMATIONS

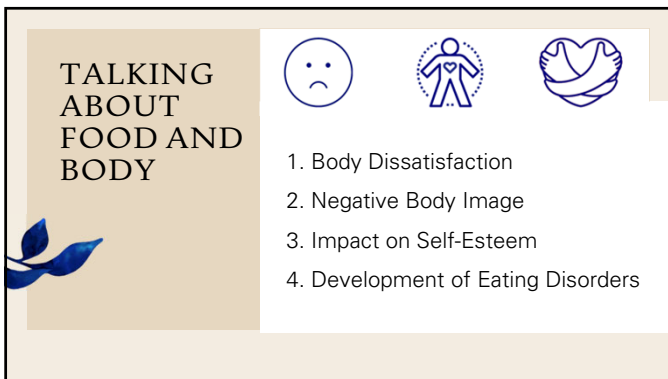
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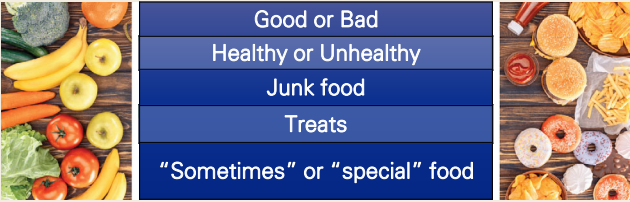
OUR FOOD



- How does our language around food impact food relationships for children?
- What is a relationship with food?
- How does a positive relationship with food contribute toward a child's health?

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LABELING FOOD



Good or Bad
Healthy or Unhealthy
Junk food
Treats
"Sometimes" or "special" food

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TALKING ABOUT FOOD

- Food focus: benefits and characteristics
- Using neutral language
- Food is not earned

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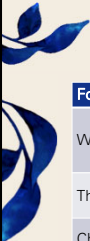


FOOD FOCUS

Focus on:	This can look like:
The benefits eating this food gives you	"Yellow fruits and vegetables help heal your cuts"
	"Orange fruits and vegetables like carrots help you see better"
	"Green fruits and vegetables like spinach help you fight being sick"
	"Red fruits and vegetables help make our hearts strong"
	"Purple and blue fruits and vegetables help build our brains"
	"Protein foods like fish or tofu help build muscles"
"Milk and cheese help build strong bones"	



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FOOD FOCUS

Focus on:	This can look like:
Where it comes from	"Apples are grown and picked from trees"
	"Carrots and potatoes grow in the ground"
	"Bread is made from wheat which grows in a field"
The food group it is in	"Eggs are part of the protein food group"
	"Broccoli is a vegetable"
Characteristics of this food	"These crackers are crunchy"
	"The red bell peppers taste sweeter to me than the green bell peppers"



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ACTIVITY

HOW WOULD YOU REFRAME THESE STATEMENTS:

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USING NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Instead of:	Consider:
"You were so good at the doctor's office today. Let's get a treat!"	"It's been a long morning, and we can use some energy. Let's have a cookie!"
"Chocolate is a 'sometimes' food which means we can only have it once in a while."	
"Carrots are healthy so it's important to eat them all."	



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USING NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Instead of:	Consider:
"You were so good at the doctor's office today. Let's get a treat!"	"It's been a long morning, and we can use some energy. Let's have a cookie!"
"Chocolate is a 'sometimes' food which means we can only have it once in a while."	"I really enjoy eating chocolate!"
"Carrots are healthy so it's important to eat them all."	"Carrots are so crunchy and sweet!"



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FOOD IS NOT EARNED

Instead of:	Consider:
"I can't believe I ate cake at the birthday party. It's going to ruin my diet."	"I enjoyed eating that piece of cake. I love celebrating with my family."
"I wasn't able to go on my morning walk so I should skip breakfast."	
"I exercised this morning because I knew I'd be eating pizza today."	
"I feel lazy for not moving my body more after lunch."	



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"I wasn't able to go on my morning walk so I should skip breakfast."	"My body feels best when I fuel it in the morning."
"I exercised this morning because I knew I'd be eating pizza today."	"I love how I feel after I move my body."
"I feel lazy for not moving my body more after lunch."	"My body needs to rest today."

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FAMILY MEALTIME



- Valuable time to talk and connect
- Allows family members to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings
- Creates a sense of belonging and strengthens family bonds
- An opportunity to turn the focus away from food
- Small changes to our words can have a big impact

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FEEDING RELATIONSHIP

The caregiver's responsibility is to choose...	The child's responsibility is to choose...
What food is being offered	If they eat the food that is offered
When food is being offered	How much food they want to eat
Where food is being offered	

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AVOIDING
MEALTIME
PRESSURE

Bribing

"You can watch TV if you eat all of your chicken"

Forcing

"You have to eat that before you can leave the table"

The one bite rule

"Just take one bite, please"

Begging

"Please eat your peas, they're good for you"

Comparing

"Look, your sister ate all her corn – why won't you?"

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Instead of...

"Eat that for me."

"If you do not eat one more bite, no dessert."

"You need to stay at the table until we're all done eating."

"You can leave once you take another bite of broccoli."

"Wow, you've eaten a lot already, that's enough for you."

"You can have another dinner roll once you've eaten your string beans."

Consider...

"Are we still hungry? There's more strawberries if you'd like some more."

"There's still food on your plate but you can stop if your tummy is telling you it's full."

"What does your belly say, is it full? Sure, you may leave."

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"What does your belly say, is it full? Sure, you may leave."

"Our next snack is not for another 2 hours. Is your tummy telling you that you're all done?"

"Of course you can have more, here you go."

"There are enough dinner rolls for everyone to have two."

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FAMILY & FRIENDS



Communicate your concerns

- Calmly & privately
- Express desire to focus on things other than physical appearance or food

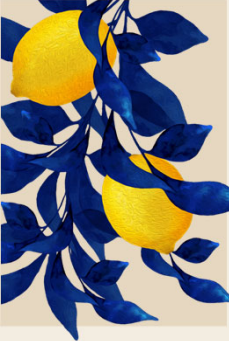
Set boundaries

- Clearly communicate boundaries around your child's food and eating habits

Redirect the conversation

- Gently redirect the conversation to a different topic

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PRACTICE NOT PERFECTION

Examples of Repair

"I'm sorry I got frustrated at dinner and compared you to your sister. I will remember next time to listen to you when you tell me you're full"

"I'm sorry, that wasn't a kind thing to say. Everyone's body is unique and special, and it's important to be respectful towards others"

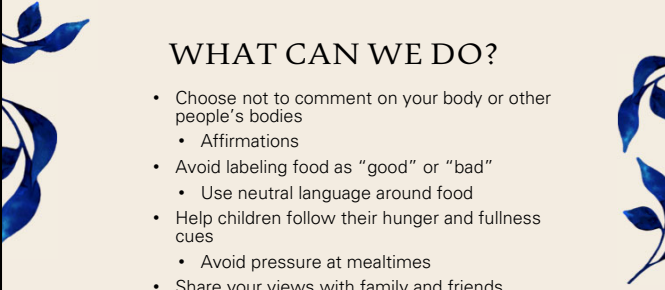
"I said I was being so bad by eating chips but they're really tasty and there is nothing wrong with enjoying something we like"

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DISCUSSION: BRINGING IT TO WIC



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WHAT CAN WE DO?

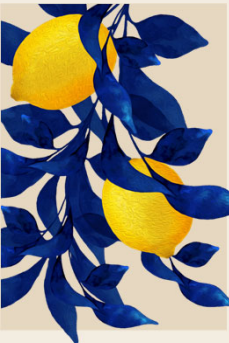
- Choose not to comment on your body or other people's bodies
 - Affirmations
- Avoid labeling food as "good" or "bad"
 - Use neutral language around food
- Help children follow their hunger and fullness cues
 - Avoid pressure at mealtimes
- Share your views with family and friends
 - Engage in repair when needed

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THANK YOU!

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RESOURCES

Power of Our Words Website:
<https://www.maricopa.gov/6815/Power-of-Our-Words>

Power of Our Words Resource Guide PDF:
<https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/prevention/azwiczwic-in-a-click/power-of-our-words-resource-guide.pdf>

Elyn Satter Institute: Division of Responsibility:
<https://www.elynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/division-of-responsibility/>

Minnesota Department of Health: WIC Weight Inclusive Approach:
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/wtinclusive.html>

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