

Mealtime Engagement Ideas

Mealtimes can provide a crucial opportunity to connect with family members. However, many distractions, such as electronics, can create barriers to connection. Parents should enforce rules to protect family mealtime, such as not allowing phones at the table and turning off televisions. The following list provides conversation activities to help families connect and have a fun mealtime experience.

CONVERSATION/ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

- 1 Conversation questions:** A parent chooses a conversation question, and each family member answers the question (see conversation questions handout).
- 2 Conversation jar:** The family fills a jar with strips of paper that have conversation questions on them. For each meal, a family member removes one paper, and the family members must answer that question.
- 3 Would you rather?** Each family member comes up with a question to ask their family members, such as, "Would you rather play in the mountains or on the beach??" or "Would you rather live on another planet or under water?"
- 4 Gratitude:** Each family member says something they feel grateful for that day.
- 5 Traditions:** Each family member says one of their favorite family traditions.
- 6 High-Low-What do you know:** Each family member says the best thing that happened that day, the worst thing that happened that day, and something they learned that day.
- 7 Ask your own question:** Each family member asks their family a question they come up with.
- 8 Story improv:** One family member starts a story by making up a sentence. The person sitting next to them then adds a line to the story, and it goes around the table until someone says "The End."
- 9 Mindful eating:** Each family member takes a turn to notice something about the texture, smell, or taste of the food they're eating.
- 10 Blindfolds:** Each family member eats blindfolded.
- 11 Opposite hand:** Each family member must eat with their opposite hand.
- 12 Family stories:** Each family member tells one of their favorite family stories. This can be an opportunity for parents to share stories about themselves, their ancestors, or other relatives.
- 13 Eat in order:** Each family member must eat a bite of one food and then another food until all the food is gone.
- 14 Eat by numbers:** Each food is assigned a number. A family member rolls the dice, and all family members have to take a bit of the food assigned to that number.

