

**Family Living
Focus**

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**Balance For
Healthy Kids**

Before you get home tonight, you'll have finished a full day of work, picked-up the children from day care, and shopped for groceries. It's between 6:30 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. and everybody is tired and cranky. Just to get through, you decide to stop for something fast for supper. Does this sound like your family?

Many children are making choices as regular consumers of fast foods. What might have been a treat for a child's celebration at the fast food place is becoming more common as families are rushed to "fit it all in," day after day. Whether it's the night for dance practice, a softball game, or music lessons, we frequently choose to take young kids to fast food places. Their diets tend to be more high fat foods and less variety from the Food Guide Pyramid.

Although kids can't always express what they need, research shows kids will make appropriate healthy choices if offered a variety of foods over a period of time. Adults need to provide the variety throughout the week: a citrus food every day, deep yellow and dark green vegetable at least every other day. Teach good eating habits by allowing children to decide how much food and which foods without making meal time a battle. They take clues from how we eat and model our healthful choices. A week's worth of meals that offer a variety of meats, fish or high protein legumes, milk, cheese and yogurt, colorful fruits and vegetables served in a variety of ways, cooked or raw, are beneficial to everyone.

Watch for signals to teach good eating habits. Just as babies

learn to signal parents that they have had enough to eat, too much food on a child's plate can be overwhelming. It is better to offer children small portions and have them ask for another spoon of food they enjoyed. Children recognize that some flavors are appealing, food has shape and texture.

Toddlers who experiment with foods tend to have better eating habits that last a life time. Plan snacks that combine foods from two groups to supplement the small meals that toddlers eat to meet their daily recommended nutrients. Offer water for thirst, juice and milk for foods at meals and snacks.

Sharing tasks in the kitchen teaches basic skills: count the pieces for a place setting or add two cups of cheese with the macaroni.

Encourage your child to help with grocery shopping and prepare food for the family. They love to see somebody eat what they made and sometimes will try it because they mixed it. While children spoon food on their own plate they practice eye-hand coordination; managing the peas on a spoon is a lot harder compared to a spoon of mashed potatoes. Use food to teach color; which foods are green?

When you are thinking of stopping for a quick supper again, consider the alternatives. Our children learn so much with meals at home. Tonight might be the first time she tries putting the spread on her bread, or he cuts a baked potato.

Without distractions of others in the restaurant or the television blaring, maybe they'll tell you about their day or together you'll plan a family day trip.

A meal that offers two vege-

**Project ABLE Helps People Understand
What It's Like To Live With A Disability**

HONESDALE (Wayne Co.) — If you've never experienced it yourself, it's hard to imagine what it's like to live with a disability everyday. That's exactly why a group of parents in Hazleton got together and started Project ABLE (Acceptance By Learning Experiences).

Project ABLE consists of a series of workstations that simulate different disabilities. Kim Huff, one of the project's founders, explains, "By using a workstation, you get a sense of what it's like to live with a disability." Huff also explains that they keep the experience fun because when everyone is laughing, you take away the fear and embarrassment of asking questions.

Penn State Cooperative Extension and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Pathways Program are sponsoring a Project ABLE

workshop for child care providers, parents, teachers, and anyone else working with children. The workshop is scheduled for Thursday, March 27 from 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. at the Lakeside School, Honesdale. Call (570) 253-5970, extension 239 to register. Cost for the program is \$1 to cover the cost of materials and refreshments.

At the workshop you'll have the opportunity to experience what it is like

to live with several different disabilities by visiting workstations. One workstation simulates Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and/or Dyslexia. At this station, you will be given a set of headphones (which magnifies the sound around you) to wear, given verbal instructions and asked to complete a writing exercise. To simulate dyslexia, you are given a worksheet and asked to complete it by looking in a mirror.

At the gross motor station, you have to climb stairs or catch a ball while your arms or legs are restrained in some way. You might also be asked to get around in the room with a wheelchair. The communication station focuses on speech, hearing and memory, and another station will help you understand what it is like to have a neurological disorder or arthritis.

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Debra Bryant, Penn State Cooperative Extension Educator in Wayne County, and herself, the parent of a special needs child, invites everyone to join in this evening of learning and fun. You will get answers to all your questions about the issues surrounding children with special needs. You will also learn about the Special Kids Network, an information and referral service for families seeking services for their children. The group also facilitates connections between community organizations, agencies, and individuals to enhance or create services for children with special needs.

For more information or to register, call the Wayne County office of Penn State Cooperative Extension at (570) 253-5970, extension 239. Childcare providers will receive 2 DPW training hours for participating.



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