

TXIN Class Topic: CH - Picky Eating Beyond the Plate

Client-centered nutrition education (CCNE) uses methods like group discussions and activities to engage clients and facilitate learning. Use this template when planning your CCNE to be either in person or virtual.

Developed by: State Agency Staff **Date Developed:** May 2023
Local Agency Name and Number *Month/Year*

Written and Approved by: State Agency Staff
Authors' names, including the Registered Dietitian who approved it.

Planning and Preparation	
CCNE Title	CH – Picky Eating Beyond the Plate
Description Provide a brief description that can be used for promoting it to clients.	Picky eating is a common concern for many families with young children. Join us to understand the basics of picky eating behavior and learn fun, low-pressure activities to do with your child that encourage food exploration! We'll share ideas for creative hands-on activities that spark your child's curiosity about food.
Objectives List what clients should expect to gain from this class.	During the class, clients will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify common picky eating behaviors and ways for caregivers to respond• Practice ways to talk to children about new foods• Discuss activities to encourage new food exploration
Target Audience(s) Who is this class designed for?	Caregivers of children 18 months and over.
Format Indicate how you plan to deliver this class.	<input type="checkbox"/> In person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual - Live <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual - Pre-recorded <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both (Class can be delivered in person or virtually)
Promotion and Registration Indicate how clients will learn about and join the class.	This class will be promoted in the following ways: <input type="checkbox"/> Verbally, such as during counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Promotional push cards, flyers, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media (give examples in the spaces below) <div></div> <input type="checkbox"/> Website <div></div> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <div>Local agencies may promote the class however it is appropriate for their clients.</div>

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	<p>Select one:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> This class <i>will</i> require registration.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> This class <i>will not</i> require registration.</p> <p>Describe how clients will register for the class, including links to website or social media. Local agencies may decide how to register clients for the class.</p>	
<p>Virtual Platform and Client Engagement</p> <p>If planning a virtual class, indicate which platform and features you will use to engage clients.</p>	<p>Which platform will you use to deliver your virtual class? (Check one.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Live</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Zoom</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> WebEx</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> GoToMeetings</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Skype</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Google Meet</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Teams</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Local agencies may decide to do the class in person or via a virtual platform of their choice.</p> </div>	<p>Which engagement features will you use during your class? (Check all that apply.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Group chat</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Private chat or questions</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Poll questions</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other response feedback (i.e. thumbs up, emoji, raised hand)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> File or screen sharing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> One-way audio with clients (they can hear you, but you cannot hear them)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> One-way video with clients (they can only see you, but you cannot see them)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Two-way audio with clients (they can hear you and you can hear them)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Two-way video with clients (they can see you and you can see them)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>
<p>Follow-up</p> <p>Indicate your plans for offering follow-up information or resources to clients after the class is completed.</p> <p>This could be a good place to offer additional classes, gather feedback about the class and provide a certificate of completion.</p>	<p>How will you follow up with clients after the class? (Check all that apply.)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Email</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Text</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Phone call</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>Local agencies may decide what works best.</p> </div> <p>What information or resources do you plan to share with clients when you follow up after the class?</p> <p>Visit TexasWIC.org and check out these resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids Activities – download the food-themed Coloring Pages used in this lesson and explore other ways to engage kids in creative food play • Recipes – find the Citrus Glazed Carrots recipe mentioned in today’s lesson, along with other family-friendly meal ideas • Health & Nutrition – explore a helpful online article on Picky Eating and browse other topics related to raising healthy eaters • Classes – take a self-paced online class on picky eating or attend live discussions on child nutrition topics 	

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	<p>Our Healthy Texas Kids YouTube channel has fun videos for kids that focus on active play, imagination, and food-related activities.</p> <p>These resources can be shared verbally for in-person classes, or via chat or follow-up email for virtual classes.</p>
<p>Staff</p> <p>Describe the role of each staff, including whether they are presenting in person, on screen or conducting technical tasks or other roles.</p>	<p>In person: At least one staff member will lead the class.</p> <p>Virtual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host/Moderator – Staff member will be off-screen controlling the technical side of this class, making sure the video is working properly and answering any questions that come up in the chat box • Activity Leader(s) – Staff member(s) will be on-screen leading the class discussion and hands-on activity • Note – Host/Moderator and Activity Leader roles may be combined so the class is taught by one staff person
<p>Location and Set Up</p> <p>Describe the location of your class. What kind of set up is needed?</p>	<p>In person: Classroom or large space with clients seated in a circle or semi-circle around the demonstration area. Leave room for baby car seats.</p> <p>Virtual: Quiet space with minimal background distractions and noise while on camera.</p>
<p>Materials and Resources</p> <p>List what you will need for your class (i.e. laptops, projector, flip chart, props, food, audiovisuals, handouts, etc.)</p>	<p>This class has 2 hands-on activities—a food taste test and a food-themed art activity. You may choose to do one or both activities. The script includes tips for leading the activities either in-person or virtually.</p> <p>Activity 1 – Mini Chef Taste Test</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whole, raw carrots with green stems ○ Soft, bite-sized cooked carrots (steam/microwave before class or use canned carrots) ○ Knife & cutting board ○ Vegetable Peeler ○ Cheese Grater ○ NE reinforcement items, such as WIC chef hats, aprons, cutting boards, kid-safe knives, cookbooks, measuring cups. (Check the WIC Catalog and review local agency supplies for items that are available.) <p>Activity 2 – Creative Carrot Art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assorted carrot scraps from Activity 1 ○ Construction paper ○ Kid-friendly paint, such as non-toxic finger paint (Or make edible paint by mixing yogurt or purees with food coloring. Thin with water to a paint consistency.) ○ Coloring pages from TexasWIC.org Kid's corner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional for in-person classes – Tips for Trying New Foods handout, Toby and Luna books to take home

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Notes/Script	
<p>Opening and Introduction</p> <p>Introduce facilitators or guests and the topic.</p> <p>Review any relevant technical details and ground rules with clients.</p>	<p><i>Welcome, everyone. We are so happy to have you here with us today. My name is ____.</i></p> <p><i>Today's class is all about picky eating and activities that you can do with your child to encourage food exploration in a fun and low-pressure setting – beyond the plate!</i></p>
<p>Icebreaker</p> <p>Anchor the class topic to the clients' lives. Use a visual, do an activity or ask a question to engage with clients.</p> <p>The icebreaker should go beyond where clients are from (location) and their basic demographics.</p>	<p>Ask clients to introduce themselves, share the age(s) of their children, and answer one or both icebreaker questions. Virtual - Ask clients to enter this information in the chat box or use polling questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Are there any foods you enjoy now as an adult that you didn't eat as a child? If so, which foods?</i> <p>Acknowledge and respond to client answers. Facilitator can share personal experience about a food they disliked but now enjoy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Using one or two words, how would you describe mealtime in your house?</i> <p>Acknowledge and respond to client answers. Validate emotions or frustrations that are expressed – encourage clients that it's normal to feel frustrated when a child doesn't seem to like any food offered or to feel excitement when a child learns to love a new food.</p>
<p>Activities and Discussion</p> <p>Make sure to include activities and open-ended questions throughout the class to engage clients.</p> <p>Keep in mind that activities and conversations should enable clients to meet all of the learning objectives.</p>	<p>Thank clients for honest responses to icebreaker(s) and transition to lesson discussion.</p> <p><i>Let's start off by talking about what is normal eating behavior around the toddler and preschool years. Picky eating behaviors are part of the normal development of most children, and most of these behaviors will go away with time.</i></p> <p><u>Normal Picky Eating Behavior</u> (share examples, note that they may look different for each child)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not wanting to try new foods and or even acting "afraid" of new foods. • Choosing a few preferred foods and refusing to eat others for a short period of time. Example: <i>"Bananas used to be Sam's favorite food. Now, he won't even touch them."</i> • Refusing to eat certain colors and textures of foods. Example: <i>"Annie won't eat anything that is green, I think it's because of the color."</i> • Fidgeting and wasting time at the table or being uninterested in eating altogether. Example: <i>"She can't seem to pay attention long enough to eat a meal!"</i> <p><i>All these behaviors are very normal. Toddlers often develop a fear of new foods (the formal word is "neophobia") around 2 years of age, right at the time they are also showing independence, using more words and testing boundaries. All these normal developmental changes together can be a frustrating and confusing time for families!</i></p>

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However, did you know that picky eating behaviors can be based on biology? These behaviors developed many years ago – as a protective way to help toddlers stay safe, to help them avoid eating dangerous or poisonous foods!

*Young children can be sensitive to change even if it is something very small.
(share examples as needed)*

- Having a huge meltdown over a banana broken in half vs. one that is still whole.
- Throwing a tantrum over a certain color cup or plate.
- Getting triggered by foods mixing or touching on their plate.

Can anyone relate? (acknowledge responses)

While it can be hard, we have to try to be kind and understanding about our toddler's uncertainty and their REAL sense of fear about things that look or feel different. If you think about it, this may be why your child continues to resort to "safe" foods, often prepackaged foods like crackers, mac and cheese or nuggets. How many of you can relate—do your children tend to want things like this? (facilitator acknowledges responses)

That's because these foods look, feel and taste the same every time. Families often say that fruits and vegetables are the biggest challenge, which makes sense because even the same fruit can vary bite after bite. Not all the blueberries in the container look, feel or taste the same. Some may be tiny, others large, while some are sour, and others are sweet. Foods can taste different based on the time of year and how they are prepared. And these small differences may feel overwhelming to a child's senses. If we can try and remember this idea, we can give our kids a little more grace as they explore new foods.

Now that we've talked about some reasons for picky eating, let's go over some mealtime tips! (encourage discussion as desired)

Mealtime Picky Eating Tips

1. **Avoid taking it personally** – try to stay positive and remember you are a great parent; children respond better to positive language and activities around food.
2. **Offer new foods alongside foods they already love**—familiar foods help your child feel safe and more comfortable trying new things; try one new food at a time.
3. **Don't give up**—it may take up to 15 exposures before a child wants to try a new food; this is completely normal.
4. **Avoid forcing or bribing**—this can have a negative effect and make mealtimes unhappy; resist telling a child to eat their whole plate or finish a certain food.
5. **Be a powerful role model**—if you eat a variety of foods, your child will see that, and over time, may want to learn to enjoy a variety of foods like you.
6. **Resist "hiding" or "sneaking in" foods**—this can make them afraid to try new things or not trust what is being served; build trust by telling them what's in their meal and letting them see fruits and vegetables in their whole form.
7. **Set regular meal and snack times**—resist the urge to serve an extra meal or snack if your child doesn't eat well; let them know it's okay if they aren't hungry and remind them of the next time that food will be served.

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8. **Make mealtimes pleasant**—try to remain neutral about spills or food refusals, explore playing games as a family or find creative ways to share about your day.
9. **Practice the division of responsibility**—the role of the parent is to provide a variety of food at regular mealtimes; the role of the child is to decide whether or not to eat and how much to eat; this can take the pressure off of you as a parent.

Optional Discussion Prompts: *“What ideas have you tried and how did they go? Which of these tips are surprising and why? What tips do you think could work for your family?”*

(facilitator wraps up discussion, introduces first activity)

Activity 1: Mini Chef Taste Test

- *Taste tests are a great way to get your child interested in trying foods. It may work best to use a food your child is familiar with, so they are not seeing the food for the first time. (Ask if anyone has done a taste test with kids before)*
- *Carrots are a great option because there are so many ways to prepare them, most kids are familiar with them, and they are so nutritious. Carrots make a great snack, and they are easy to take with you on the go.*
- Address that raw carrots can be a choking hazard – make sure children are developmentally ready.

Activity Steps:

1. **Call the taste test a mini-chef exploration activity.** Kids are more likely to participate if you make it fun and pretend they are young chefs who have an important job.
2. **Encourage them to dress up.** Try a chef hat or apron or let them practice with their own cutting board and kid-safe knife.
In person: pass out chef-related items for parents to take home OR if kids are present, they can use them right away.
Virtual: Encourage clients to ask about fun cooking-related items at their next WIC office visit - like chef hats, cutting boards, measuring cups or cookbooks. Hold up examples on screen.
3. **Encourage little chefs to use all their senses:** eyes, ears, nose, hands and mouth.
4. **Introduce three preparations of carrots.** Raw, steamed and shredded.

Raw, whole carrots: (Hold up a bundle of whole carrots with green tops still on)

- Look for these in the refrigerated produce aisle, next to leafy greens.
- These are covered by WIC benefits.
- Many kids have only ever seen baby carrots in a bag, so this could be very eye-opening for them.
- Demonstrate carrot preparation - cut off tops and peel carrots. Save the tops and some of the peel to use later for the second activity.
- Have kids help prepare the carrots. Try child-friendly knives (hold up plastic serrated salad-style knife). Kids can help peel, too.
- Slice raw carrots into thin sticks. These thin sticks are easier for children to eat and handle.

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Steamed carrots: (Show bowl of cooked carrots).

- To make these at home, use a steamer or even a microwave - simply put the pieces into a bowl with a small amount of water and cover. The steamed carrots are done when they are soft. If your child will be helping you, be safe when steaming the carrots.
- For an easier option – try canned carrots, just heat and serve!

Shredded carrots:

- Demonstrate how to grate the carrot on the cheese grater. Use a cheese grater for shredding –this is fun for your kids as well.

5. **Talk to your child about the carrots while preparing them.** Make it fun and engaging. Try these sample questions.
 - *“Do these carrots look different than the carrots you have seen before?”*
 - *“Where do carrots grow?” “Which part of a carrot grows underground?”*
6. **Have your child draw three circles on a piece of paper.** (hold up paper example) Place the different carrots in each circle. Sit with your child. Before tasting, try asking your child some of these questions about the carrots.
 - *“How did we make each carrot?”* -- With our hands! Use words like, cut, chopped, steamed, shredded, peeled, grated.
 - *“What do you see when we look at the carrots?”* -- Colors like orange, brown and green. Shapes and sizes like round, pointy, long, soft and bumpy.
 - *“Let’s use our nose! What does the carrot smell like?”* -- Words like the outside, the ground, sweet, bitter, watery, nutty.
7. **With your child, touch and taste the different carrots.** If your child refuses at this point, don’t be discouraged. Be sure to let the child know it is okay that they are not eating the carrots. As you are trying the carrots ask questions based on how the child answered the previous questions.
 - *“I wonder if the uncooked carrots taste different than the steamed carrots?”*
 - *“I wonder if the long carrots taste different than the shredded carrot?”*
 - Remind caregivers that children don’t have to taste the carrots to still benefit from this activity.
8. **Celebrate “wins” from this activity.** (even if kids didn’t taste the carrots)
 - **This activity counts as exposure to a food.** We know that it can take up to 15 times before a child will try a new food.
 - **Your child saw 3 different ways the carrot can be prepared.** This teaches them that it’s the same food just cooked differently, and they are more likely to believe you because they helped to prepare the foods. Some children like cooked vegetables while others like them raw and a taste test is a great way to find that out about your child.
 - **Your child learned new words around food and eating.** This is important because the more words your child can use to describe the foods, the better insight you have on what their food preferences are and why. You might find

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out that your child thinks “crunchy” foods are “yuck.” This kind of information can be so helpful!

- **You spent quality time together.** Together, you practiced touching, feeling and preparing a food that your child previously wouldn’t even touch before. You are finding out so much, even if your child didn’t taste the food! And if they did taste the food -- you may find that your child prefers carrots prepared one way over the other. This is huge!

Optional Discussion Questions: *Does anyone want to share any thoughts about this activity? What other foods could you try this with at home?*

Activity 2: Creative Carrot Art

This activity is even more low pressure and doesn’t even ask the child to try the food. It just creates an opportunity for exposure and conversation with your child.

Supplies needed:

- Carrot tops and peels (from Activity 1)
- Construction paper
- Kid-friendly finger paint (if you don’t have child-friendly paint, try using yogurt or baby food thinned with water to make edible paint)
- Whole carrots with tops cut off

Activity Steps:

1. **Encourage your child to make their own art with the carrot pieces and paint.** Put the different carrot parts in front of your child and let them go. Things to try:
 - Paint with the tips of the carrots
 - Use carrot tops as round “stamps”
 - Use the carrot stems and peeled pieces as a “paintbrush”
 - Use the whole carrot as a “paint roller”
 - Put the paper on a tray and let the carrot pieces roll around, like marble art

This activity is called “process art”, as there is no right or wrong way to do it. It really is about your child having the freedom to experiment, feel, touch and use the carrots any way they would like.

2. **While doing the activity, talk with your child about the carrots.** Ask things like:
 - *Which part of the carrot did you like painting with the most? Why?*
 - *What part of the carrot was the hardest to paint with? Why?*
 - *Which part of the carrot stays above the ground? Which part of the carrot grows under the ground?*
 - *Are all the carrots the exact same shape? Do some look different? What colors do you see?*
 - *What animals eat carrots?*
 - *What can we dip carrots in besides paint?*
 - *What other type of vegetable or fruit would be fun to use as a painting tool?*
3. **Display their art.** Once it dries, display the carrot art on your refrigerator or other visible place as a reminder of the fun activity you did together. This activity

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provides a chance to interact with a new food, but there is no pressure to eat it. Painting with carrots is a positive exposure to a new food.

Optional discussion: *Has anyone tried something like this with their child? Or another fun activity that involves food but not actually eating the food?*

Other Activities to Help with Picky Eating

The Texaswic.org website has a great variety of other activities that can help with picky eating. Check out some of these ideas:

- **Coloring Sheets:** In the Kids section, find these fun coloring sheets. There is even a carrot one. The more you talk about, learn about, and expose your child to new foods, even on coloring sheets or in books, the more likely they are to try new things.

In person: Pass around printed coloring sheets to caregivers. **Virtual:** Host shows the coloring sheets on screen and/or adds [link](#) to the chat.

- **Cooking:** Cooking with your child can also help them get more excited about new foods. In the Let's Cook! section of the website, find tips on ways your child can help in the kitchen, based on their age and skills.

Virtual: The host shows "Let's Cook!" webpage on screen and/or adds [link](#) to the chat.

- **Recipes:** TexasWIC.org also has lots of tasty recipes using WIC foods. One online recipe pairs really well with today's activities - Citrus Glazed Carrots. This can add to the theme of exploring carrots.

Virtual: The host shows the Citrus Glazed Carrot recipe on screen and/or adds [link](#) to the chat.

Do you all have a favorite recipe that you like making with your child? (acknowledge responses)

Remember, you can always apply any of these activities to other foods. You could use cucumber for something like this and even introduce a pickle as part of it.

There are so many options, but please keep in mind that you don't want to overwhelm the child and do all these activities in one day. Spread them out. Be patient with your child and allow them time to process the activities before doing the next one. The most important thing is that you are having fun with your child in a low-pressure environment and they are continuing to get exposure to the new food.

If you do feel as though you've tried many of these tips and are still truly concerned about your child's eating, we recommend checking in with your child's health care provider. Let the provider know about your concerns and the provider can either reassure that your child is on track or refer them to a specialist if needed.

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<p>Closing and Evaluation</p> <p>Review key points and tie in the icebreaker activity.</p> <p>Invite clients to share how they will use what they learned in the future.</p> <p>Let clients know you will follow-up with them via email, text or other method.</p> <p>Thank everyone for attending and participating.</p> <p>Cover any additional resources or reminders, before ending the class.</p>	<p><i>Picky eating can certainly be so frustrating as a parent. However, by continuing to offer healthy options and low-pressure ways to explore new foods you can help make mealtimes fun and new foods less scary. With time, your child will build their confidence in trying new foods and probably find so many new favorite flavors to enjoy!</i></p> <p>Optional Discussion: <i>What is one food-related activity that you are looking forward to doing with your child this week? Do you have any final questions that we haven't talked about yet?</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for sharing all your great questions and creative ideas for food activities. Your WIC office is always here for support if you have any future questions about picky eating or child nutrition. We sincerely appreciate you spending your (morning/afternoon/evening) with us!</i></p> <p>Virtual – Provide instructions for how clients can receive credit for the lesson and obtain benefits.</p>
<p>Supplemental Information</p> <p>Describe attachments and other needed information.</p>	<p>These additional picky eating tips are for facilitators to use only as needed based on client Q & A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give choices. Let your child help you plan snacks and meals for the week.• Some children like their foods separately while others like them together. Keep this in mind when offering new foods.• Start out with small portions of new foods. Don't overwhelm the plate with the new food. A good rule of thumb for serving size is a tablespoon of a food for each year of age.• Try different ways to serve the same food. For instance, some children like cooked vegetables while others like them raw.• Make foods fun, easy and interesting to eat. Examples of this could be making funny-faced open sandwiches or using cookie-cutter shapes, skewers or vegetable noodles. Make sure to provide appropriate utensils and methods so the food is easy to eat for your child.• Try dips to keep kids interested in new foods. Yogurt, hummus, avocado, ranch or cheese dips are all good options.• Stay positive – working through picky eating challenges can be frustrating, but picky eating is a typical behavior for many preschoolers. As long as a child is growing normally and has plenty of energy, he is most likely getting the nutrients he needs. If parents are concerned that a child's eating behavior has lasted a long time or is very restrictive, they should talk to the child's doctor.• Being a good role model and consistently eating the healthy foods you want your child to eat is a great place to start.

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- Avoid labeling your child as a “picky eater”—help your child build confidence by using positive attributes instead, such as a “learning eater” or “exploring eater.”
- Forcing a child to eat their whole plate or certain foods could have a negative effect such as creating an unhealthy relationship with food, an unhappy mealtime or even causing your child to dislike the healthy food completely. Instead of this, simply continue to offer healthy foods on their plate along with other foods they already like to eat. The role of a parent is to provide a variety of foods at regular meal and snack times, and it is the child’s decision whether or not to eat the food and how much to eat. It’s important not to force or encourage a child to empty their plate.
- Additionally, praising a child when they do finish the food on their plate is not recommended. Children need to learn their body’s signs of hunger and fullness. When they don’t develop this ability, they can lose their ability to regulate their weight.
- Having regular family mealtimes and providing the same foods to your preschooler that the rest of the family is served will set a good example for your little one.
- Keeping distractions away from mealtimes including devices, screens and toys, will help keep the focus on the meal and each other.