

Partnering with Parents to Create Healthy Home Environments

Abstract: Help parents recognize the impact of the home environment, including their personal health beliefs and behaviors, to impact their children's health and lifestyle choices. Learn how to inspire a commitment to positive change that leads to healthier families. Be equipped to empower parents to take realistic and repeatable steps that become healthy habits that are sensible, satisfying, and sustainable. Be prepared for obstacles and resistance to change.

Learning Objectives – You will be able to...

- Describe 3 or more ways parental role modeling influences a child's beliefs and behaviors.
- Describe 3 or more ways the home routine and environment influences behaviors.
- Describe 3 or more practical steps that empower parents to build healthy household habits and overcome everyday obstacles.

Meet Barbara Mayfield, MS, RDN

Barb's passion is helping other nutrition professionals create and deliver compelling messages that are evidence-based, meaningful, memorable, and motivating. She is retired from the Nutrition Science Department at Purdue University where she taught Nutrition Communication, Lifecycle Nutrition, Public Health Nutrition, Dietary Guidance, and Introductory Nutrition. Barb spent 20 years with WIC as a local program coordinator and high-risk counselor and was an early intervention specialist with Indiana First Steps. She currently serves as a consultant for Head Start. She directs the Promoting Family Meals Project through Purdue's Center for Families. She is currently working with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to write a textbook about nutrition communication with an expected publication date of 2019. She consults, writes, and speaks about nutrition communication as president of Nutrition Communicator, LLC. Her educational background includes a B.S. in Dietetics from Purdue University and M.S. in Human Nutrition from Cornell University. She



received multiple teaching awards at Purdue, and was named Outstanding Dietetics Educator by both the Indiana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Nutrition and Dietetics Educators and Preceptors (NDEP) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. In May 2018 she will be inducted into the Purdue Nutrition Science Hall of Fame. Barb lives in Delphi, Indiana. She and her husband Joe have three grown children and four grandchildren.

Let's Connect:

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What is a “healthy home environment”?

Questions we will answer today...

- How do parents influence a child’s health beliefs and behaviors?
- How does the home routine and environment influence health behaviors?
- How can we empower parents to build healthy household habits and overcome everyday obstacles?

How do parents influence a child’s health beliefs and behaviors?

- **Parents are role models** – children imitate their parents:
“Parenting Counts: Kids Learn by Watching You”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGNiA2tyFLs>
“Children See, Children Do”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JrtpCM4yMM>
- **Beliefs and behaviors are “caught” more than taught**
Children “catch” their beliefs about their bodies from their parents:
The Dove Legacy Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pqknd1ohhT4>

Children learn dietary behaviors from parental behaviors and parenting practices:
Larsen, et al. *Appetite*. 2015: 89; 246-257.

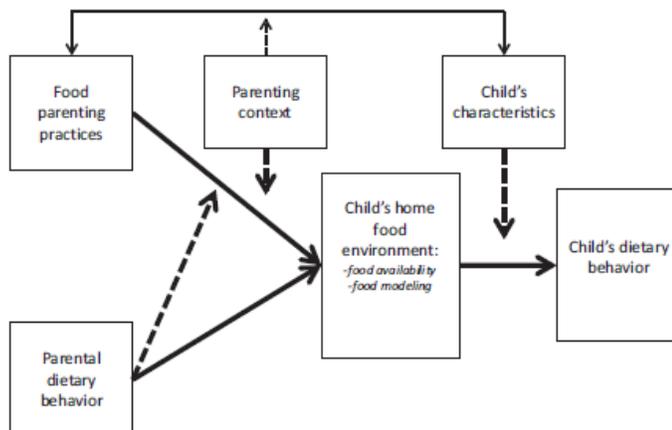


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of how parents influence their child's dietary behavior.
Note: Dotted lines are moderating effects; thicker lines indicate most important effects

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- **Parental beliefs and behaviors provide both positive and negative influences...**

Positive examples:

Negative examples:

How does the home routine and environment influence health behaviors?

- **Routine and structure are essential for many reasons...**
 - Safety, security, and trust
 - Expectations can be established
 - Roles can be delineated
 - Chaotic lives promote behavior problems – routine promotes positive behaviors
- **A healthy home environment promotes positive health behaviors**
 - A food environment abounding in healthy choices
 - Age-appropriate supports for food preparation and serving
 - A location for family meals, preferably technology-free
 - One or more locations for enjoyable activity, preferably together

Ways to support a healthy home routine and environment:

- Helpful guidance for healthy routines and environments:
 - <https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/>
 - <https://jillcastle.com/>
- Evidence for family-style service in child care:
 - <https://www.doe.in.gov/nutrition/recipe-environment>
- Free family meal resources:
 - https://www.edustore.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item_Number=HHS-832-W#.WPjGRqK1uUI
 - https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/cff/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/pfm_letstalkaboutmealtime_english.pdf
- Children WANT to eat with their parents:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHqfrpVcW4I>

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How can we empower parents to build healthy household habits and overcome everyday obstacles?

1. Recognize parents for their positive potential for change.

Acknowledge their desire for happy, _____, smart, successful children. Demonstrate you believe they are the _____ about their children and you perceive them as doing things in their child's _____ interest. Acknowledge that parenting is a _____ job and recognize their desire for parenting to be _____. Our goal is to _____ them achieve their goal of being the best parent they can possibly be to have a strong, resilient family with healthy, well-adjusted children who become responsible, successful adults.

2. Help parents recognize they are a powerful role model.

Share "Copy Cat" videos and discuss ways their children imitate them.
Share "Dove Legacy" video and discuss how to role model positive body image.

3. Help parents determine ways they want to be a positive role model.

Use the "Healthy Children Exercise" diagram on the next page in an activity that can be completed as a group or one-on-one. Ask parents to begin by brainstorming words and phrases that describe the "healthy" person they want their child/children to be/become and write them *inside* the outline of the child. Then, ask parents to consider how they can help their children attain that "ideal" by brainstorming ways they can role model what they've described. Write those ideas around the *outside* of the child.

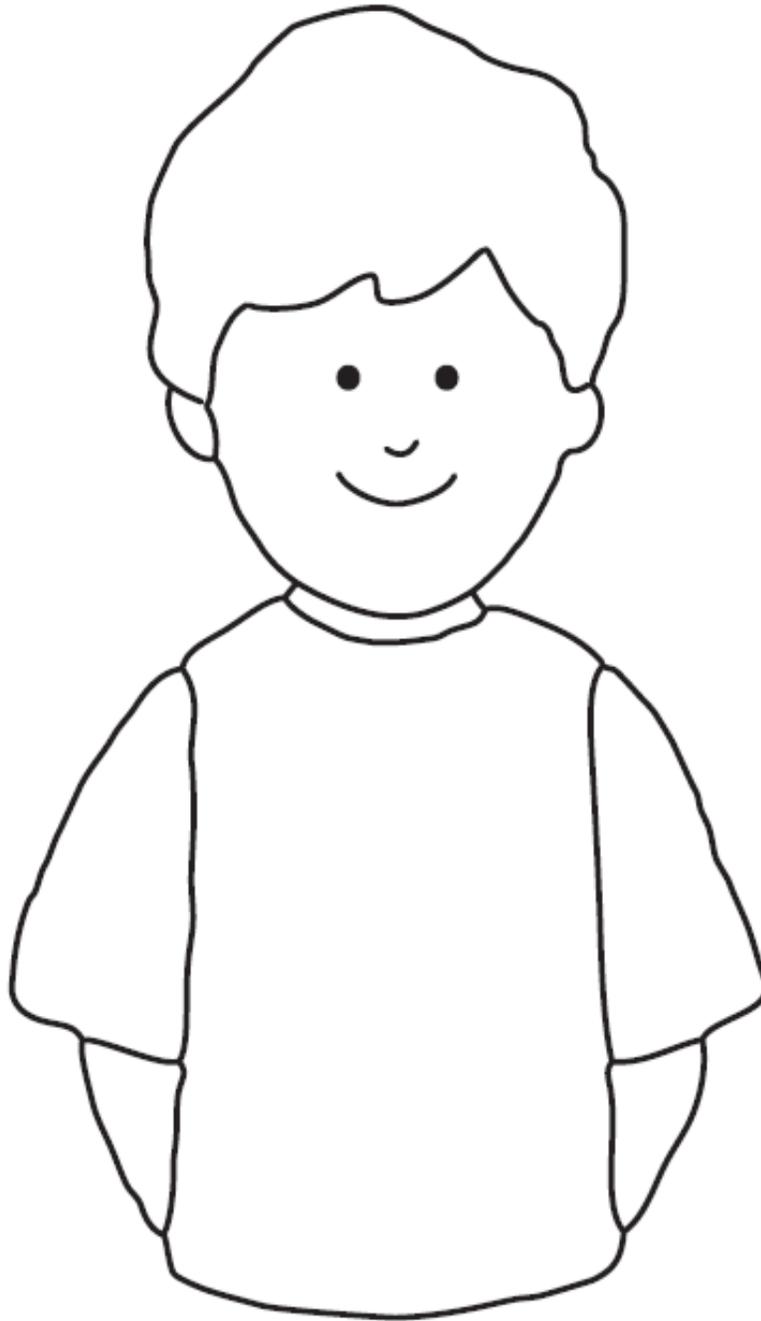
4. Engage parents in a discussion about their family's household routines, then problem-solve solutions to any current "chaos."

Describe a "typical" day... what is consistent and predictable? What is not? When do struggles occur? What is stressful? What would they like to be different?
Select a realistic goal to create a more consistent household routine.

5. Help parents evaluate their current family meal routines and set goals to increase the frequency, consistency, family involvement, mealtime atmosphere, ease of preparation, etc. to achieve what they desire for their family.

What is their current family meal situation? What works? What challenges do they face? Share family meal video and pamphlets, discuss value of family meals. What benefits of family meals are important to them?
Select a realistic goal for family meals related to timing, location, food prep, age-appropriate expectations, technology-free atmosphere, etc.

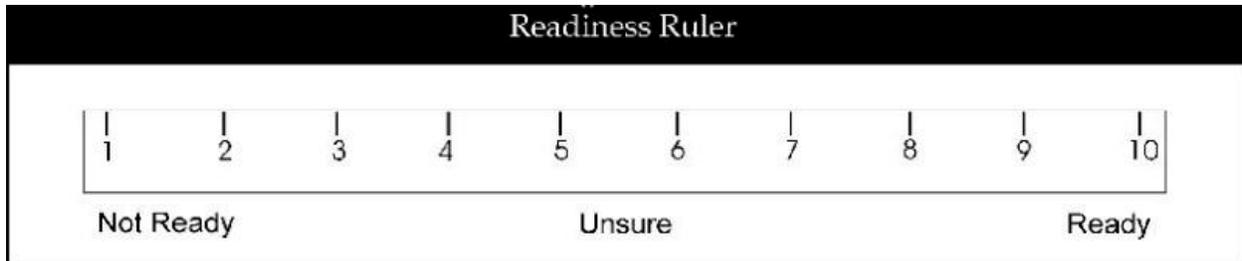
Healthy Children Exercise



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“On a scale of 1 to 10, how ready are YOU to partner with parents in new or improved ways to create healthy home environments?” _____

Which is... (1 – 3) “not ready” (4 – 6/7) “unsure” or (7/8 – 10) “ready”



Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK64968/figure/A62795/>

Based on the assessment of your readiness, what is a good next step to take?

What do you need to learn or practice to progress further?

What questions do you need answered?

Who might you work with to take steps forward?

When will you assess your progress?

***“The sign of great parenting is not the child’s behavior.
The sign of truly great parenting is the parent’s behavior.”***

~Andy Smithson