

## **Strategies for Introducing New Foods to Children**

**Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD and Janice Fletcher, EdD**

**Have a tasting party (game)**

**Show food prior to mealtime**

**Involve children in preparation**

**Let children assemble their own combination foods**

**Compare the new food to a food they already know**

**Serve a new food with a familiar food**

**Graph children's opinions of the food**

**Offer the food many times**

**Remember you are a powerful role model**

**Ask "Why don't you try it? You don't have to like it."**

### **Phrases that help children to accept new foods:**

1. John said he likes the kiwi fruit.
2. What do you think this tastes like? It tastes familiar to me.
3. What do you like best about the kiwi?
4. I see some tiny seeds in here.
5. Kiwi is a fruit, so it is sweet and juicy.
6. I think kiwi tastes sort of like a banana and sort of like a strawberry.

### **Phrases that hinder acceptance of new foods:**

1. Look at John eat his kiwi. Why can't you be like John?
2. Eat some kiwi for me.
3. Big boys and girls eat kiwi.
4. It's good. You will like the kiwi.
5. You can have some noodles after you eat the kiwi.
6. You can go out and play after you eat one slice of kiwi.

## **Estrategias para presentar nuevos alimentos a los niños** **Laurel Branen, PhD, RD, LD y Janice Fletcher, EdD**

**Haga una fiesta de degustación (juego)**

**Muestre los alimentos antes de la hora de comer**

**Involucre a los niños en la preparación**

**Permita que los niños ensamblen su propia combinación de alimentos**

**Compare los nuevos alimentos con alimentos que ellos ya conocen**

**Sirva un alimento nuevo con un alimento que ya es familiar.**

**Grafique las opciones de comida de los niños**

**Ofrezca los alimentos muchas veces**

**Recuerde que Ud. es un poderoso modelo de comportamiento**

**Pregunte: “Por qué no lo puebas? No te tiene que gustar...”**

**Frases que ayudan a los niños a aceptar nuevos alimentos:**

1. Juan dice que le gusta el kiwi
2. A qué sabor piensas que esto se parece? A mí me parece que sabe a algo familiar.
3. Qué es lo que te gusta más del kiwi?
4. Yo veo unas semillitas aquí
5. El kiwi es una fruta, así que es dulce y jugoso
6. Yo creo que el kiwi sabe un poco como plátano, y un poco como fresa

**Frases que perjudican la aceptación de nuevos alimentos:**

1. Mira como Juan come su kiwi. Por qué no puedes ser como Juan?
2. Come un poco de kiwi para mí.
3. Los niños y niñas grandes comen kiwi.
4. Es rico. Te va a gustar el kiwi
5. Puedes comer algo de fideos después que comas el kiwi.
6. Puedes salir a jugar afuera después que comas una tajada de kiwi

## What You Say Matters! Motivating Children at the Mealtime Table

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There is evidence that reinforcement works to motivate and maintain learning. Teachers reinforce mealtime behaviors and habits with what they say. Mindful teachers are *intentional and purposeful* about the power of their words on children's motivation. If you want to be intentional about what you say to encourage and reinforce a child's learning, it is wise to think about the power of words before you talk. What you say at the table matters!

### Types of Comments for Reinforcement/Encouragement at Mealtimes

(See Figure 1 and 2 for examples)

- **Neutral:** These comments are impartial and offer no particular support for or against an action.
- **Person-centered:** These comments offer reinforcement that focuses on the characteristics of a child.
- **Achievement-centered:** These comment offer reinforcement on the quality of behavior.
- **Effort-centered:** These comments offer reinforcement of child's attempt at the act or behavior.
- **Process-centered:** These comments offer reinforcement of what the child is doing as the behavior is practiced, along with a supportive statement.

### Which Types of Comment Works Best With Young Children?

#### These TWO are most EFFECTIVE

With young children, **process-centered encouragement** comes in at a tie with **effort-centered encouragement**. Young children are as motivated by encouragement of effort as they are by encouragement of their process. With people who are older than five years, however, the most effective comments are those that are process-centered reinforcements. This type of comment helps people know exactly what you are encouraging them to do or learn.

#### These THREE have LITTLE EFFECTIVENESS

**Achievement centered comments** come in a distant third to effort-centered or process-centered comments for motivating children. **Person-centered comments** are only mildly effective to motivate children. **Neutral comments** have no effect.

### Why should you care about what you say?

Does it take too much time and effort to use effort or process praise? Think about how your desire to be an effective teacher. We want to help children to be competent and successful. It takes time to become comfortable using effort and process-centered encouragement. You can learn to use effective encouragement comments. Practice using effort and process-centered encouragement with staff and family members when time and busyness with the children are not factors.

### What You Say Really Matters

Once you know how to use effort and process-centered encouragement, it becomes easy to be intentional about using comments that reinforce children's mealtime development. You will become aware of the emptiness of person or achievement-centered praise.

LESS EFFECTIVE

Person centered praise  
  
"You are a good girl."

LESS EFFECTIVE

Achievement centered praise  
  
• "You are the best pourer in the world."

MORE EFFECTIVE

Effort centered praise  
  
• "You worked hard to pour that milk."

MOST EFFECTIVE

Process centered praise  
  
• "You picked up the pitcher, tilted it, and watched as the milk went into your cup. You poured your milk all by yourself."

Neutral comment: Teacher says, "Uh huh. I see that."

Person-centered comment: Teacher says, "Yes, you are a big girl."

Achievement-centered comment: Teacher says, "You are the best carrot-eater in the whole school."

Effort-centered comment: Teacher says, "You were brave and you worked hard to get up courage to try those carrots."

Process-centered comment: Teacher says, "You picked up that carrot. You smelled it. You tasted it. You took a bite, and then, you chewed it up, and you said you liked it. You are learning to try foods you've never tried before."