

Food Phrases Transcript

00:00:01 Announcer

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00:00:24 Mindy McCulley

Hello and welcome to Talking FACS. What you need to know about family, food, finance, and fitness.

I am your host, Mindy McCulley, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Specialist for instructional support at the University of Kentucky.

The things adults say around children matter. This includes the way we talk about food and children's behavior around food. Today, we'll talk about differences between phrases that help or hamper children trying new foods. My guest is Doctor Courtney Luecking Extension Specialist for food and nutrition. And our topic is Phrases that Encourage Children to Try New Foods.

Welcome, Courtney.

00:01:03 Courtney Luecking

Thank you, Mindy.

00:01:05 Mindy McCulley

So we are gonna talk about phrases that encourage children to eat or not to eat.

Words matter. Words really do matter. And I was telling you earlier that I have been preaching this my whole life or not my whole life. But as long as I've had children and now that I have a grandchild and I know, that we are in that stage of our life and now that my husband is preaching it too.

00:01:33 Courtney Luecking

I love it. I love it.

00:01:34 Mindy McCulley

That finally he's, it's sinking in for him too.

00:01:38 Courtney Luecking

So wise. I mean, because we talk all the time, right? But it could be so easy to not think what we say is going to have a lasting imprint. And, you know, as you were talking about, it's broadly important how our words impact children. And today we'll focus more on how the way we talk and, and the things we say around Children about food and their behaviors, about food and how that can shape their attitudes as they grow and, and really to build a healthy relationship with food,

Children need support from caregivers of all shapes and forms when trying new foods and that negative language, it's so subtle and easy to use. But it can really create some unhealthy relationships that we want to avoid.

00:02:24 Mindy McCulley

I've got a little story - when both of my children were small, we talked about what food you ate to get your bones to grow and get your muscles to grow and all those things. And I didn't know that they were paying any attention.

You know, I thought I was I was preaching to deaf ears. But when Josh was 17, he worked at a fast food restaurant and he fell into a vat of oil and had a really serious burn.

And so, had to go to the burn center at U of L and the first morning that he woke up in the hospital, they brought him breakfast and I can't remember what it was but it wasn't a very good breakfast. And he looked at it and he said, "oh no, this is not going to work." And the poor little attendant who brought the breakfast said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "I need protein. My mama says protein grows skin and I need protein. So please bring me some protein." So I didn't know he was paying attention, but he was.

00:03:31 Courtney Luecking

He was!

00:03:32 Mindy McCulley

And they brought him a couple of eggs and off we went.

00:03:34 Courtney Luecking

So what a great example though to show how important our words are and that they really can last with children for a long time.

00:03:42 Mindy McCulley

Yes. So that was a positive experience. But what are some examples of negative language that does not support children trying new food?

00:03:52 Courtney Luecking

Yeah. So I think I briefly mentioned that the negative language can be so subtle. And so let's talk through some examples of those.

One might be: **if you don't finish your plate, I'll be upset.**

This is yes, it's easy to say right? Because when we think about the time and energy and resources and money that went into preparing said food for a child.

But telling them that an unfinished plate upsets that you or anyone else really teaches Children to eat for approval rather than for hunger.

So that's one way or one example of language that we would want to avoid another one might be: **you have to finish your plate before you can leave the table.**

I'm imagining you might have heard this before.

00:04:35 Mindy McCulley

I know I have my mother used to hear that and she had horror stories of having to sit at the table until long after. And so she vowed that that was not something she was ever gonna tell her children. And so I didn't hear that.

00:04:52 Courtney Luecking

Ok.

00:04:53 Mindy McCulley

So she told us why we didn't hear it.

00:04:55 Courtney Luecking

Yes. But another again, we can appreciate why these things have been said to us or others. But this is another example that teaches children to eat for other reasons, other than to your attention to their hunger and fullness cues.

00:05:10 Mindy McCulley

Yes.

00:05:10 Courtney Luecking

And, and one more example that I think might be pretty common is that we might find ourselves saying: **Well, you can't have dessert until you finish your veggies or you eat your veggies,** right?

So this can be problematic because we're rewarding children with another food item that they enjoy. And it can usually backfire on us right?

Then they don't seem to like the food that maybe it's Brussels sprouts, for example, they learn to not like that even more Or they learn that other foods are better than others.

So that's, that's another example of kind of that more negative association that we want to avoid.

00:05:49 Mindy McCulley

So we don't want to make one food, a reward for another food that they should all have equal weight.

00:05:56 Courtney Luecking

Exactly.

00:05:57 Mindy McCulley

OK. So what are some examples of positive ways to encourage children to try new things?

00:06:04 Courtney Luecking

So those examples I just gave, we can think about they're kind of like ultimatums, kind of like power struggles, right? Or rules.

So instead of that, let's ask questions, let's be curious about a child's experience with the food or just simply speak objectively about the food.

So a nice example of how to say something objective is to be **upfront about (the food)**.

This is a blueberry, it is sweet, it is blue, it's round.

So you're just describing what you see and you're helping Children understand what they're looking at and to start to make relationships but not all blueberries are sweet, right? Some might be a little hard. It depends and so kind of setting up that expectation for what Children are going to get and it doesn't match their actual experience. But talking about the shapes or the colors or the size or how it feels in terms of like the temperature, this can make children more comfortable rather than surprised with a new food.

00:07:04 Mindy McCulley

OK. All right.

00:07:05 Courtney Luecking

And then asking questions like I think we've talked about this before but being a detective, **What do you think of it? Do you like it? Which one is your favorite?** It makes children part of the process and helps them process that experience.

I mean, over the weekend I heard several times, I don't like that. So my reaction could have easily been, well, you liked this before? You know, but instead it was like, what don't you like about it?

And sometimes it was the texture or sometimes it was the flavor and we could maybe solve that with a dip for example, or preparing it differently the next time.

00:07:42 Mindy McCulley

Yes, Eleanor told me the other day. Blueberries are my number one number one.

Like what does that mean?

00:07:49 Courtney Luecking

Yes, tell me more. What do you mean by that? And just help again, helping them understand what they're encountering because new foods can be a little intimidating.

00:07:59 Mindy McCulley

So are there helpful phrases we can use to respond when children have a strong reaction to something?

00:08:05 Courtney Luecking

Oh my gosh. Yes, I was thinking back to this weekend. I had my niece in town and so what one really loves the other strongly opposes. So there was a lot of um back and forth of like, eew, that's gross. I can't believe you like it or it's my favorite.

And so first recognizing not all children will like all things and particularly not on the first go around. So reminding ourselves that we can again, ask questions, what didn't you like about it? Tell me more.

Depending on the age of the child, will determine the kind of questions that you ask for a young one. It might just be like, you know, let's try this again another time and it's just like it ends there.

Like I'm acknowledging that you didn't like this and we'll try again some other time and maybe we'll try it in different shape or temperature or texture or form, asking kids for their input if they're a little bit older.

Oh, what might make it taste better to you next time and then you're helping them process that and then you can honor that in the future and see if it goes over differently the next time.

00:09:08 Mindy McCulley

I heard that something was gross this weekend too. And I was taken aback by that because it was the first time I've heard gross. But I said, do we know what gross means? Well, yes, that's yucky. I said ok, since we know what that means, then we're ok. And we'll move on.

00:09:25 Courtney Luecking

I'm reminded that we all like different things, right? so it's ok to like different things. There's nothing wrong with that. But we don't want what I would say Yuck is Someone else's yum.

00:09:35 Mindy McCulley

Yes,

00:09:36 Courtney Luecking

because you don't want them to feel bad because they like something and, and would you want to feel bad? If you like something and someone else didn't.

00:09:43 Mindy McCulley

Yeah. And I think it's important to recognize that especially toddlers sometimes say things just because they've heard somebody else say it. And so finding out if they really know what they are saying is important.

00:09:56 Courtney Luecking

exactly.

00:09:58 Mindy McCulley

So Courtney, is there anything else that we need to think about as we are offering children the opportunity to try new and different food,

00:10:08 Courtney Luecking

you know, I think as an adult caregiver, sometimes we just need our own reminder to slow down a lot of our autopilot responses might tend towards that negative language. So before we respond, just giving ourselves a moment to think about, you know, might this be helpful or might this not be helpful?

And is there a way that I could slightly rephrase it or just ask a question instead of kind of state a rule or get into a power struggle with a kid over a food?

00:10:37 Mindy McCulley

And I think that's a great reminder because oftentimes we're trying to get them to eat on our schedule rather than their own timeline.

And sometimes they'll eventually get to it when they're ready.

00:10:49 Courtney Luecking

Exactly.

00:10:51 Mindy McCulley

Thank you, Courtney for spending this time with us today and I can't wait until your newest little one is ready to eat all of these fun new foods.

00:11:02 Courtney Luecking

It will be fun for sure.

00:11:06 Mindy McCulley

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00:11:13 Announcer

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