



HEALTH AND HAPPINESS-LET IT GO

Context: This scenario dwells into the complexities of a devoted mother trying to uphold healthy eating habits while her growing children seek social independence through shared food experiences with friends.

Objectives: In this session, parents will explore questions like:

1. How can we balance our expectations for healthy eating with our children's developmental needs for socialization and autonomy?
2. What communication strategies help reduce conflict and foster mutual understanding around food choices?
3. How can parents manage their own stress and emotional responses while guiding children toward responsible decision-making?

Scenario: Mithra (Mother), Vikas (Father), Laya (daughter) & Shreyas (son)

Mithra, a pediatric nutrition specialist, is a busy mom of Laya and Shreyas. Her husband Vikas, an attorney, is busy with his own business and leaves all household matters to Mithra. Living with extended family with her in-laws makes kitchen and cooking another important aspect of her life. Infantile health issues of Laya also make home cooking and healthy eating part of their family. It seemed to be chugging along, until the children reached middle school. After school activities and hanging out with friends led to ordering outs and snacking, which was unheard of before. Mithra, as she was feeling she was losing grip, tried to keep it all under control.

Mithra: Despite my busy schedule, I am cooking for all of you. Making it healthy and wholesome. Why don't you pack food for after-school activities too?

Laya: Mom, all my friends order out, and I am having fun sharing food and time with them.

Shreyas: Mom, they are making fun of me when I open a lunch box that was packed at 7 am, so late in the afternoon. Moreover, warm food is tastier than cold food.

Mithra: So, you both are basically disrespecting my efforts and intelligence as a nutrition specialist to decide regarding your food.

Laya: Mom, this is not coming out of disrespect. I am eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner made by you. The only food I eat out is when I have after school activities and it also makes me feel good. Please understand.

Shreyas: Whatever you say, Mom.

Vikas walks into the living room while listening to this conversation.



Mithra: I cannot argue with both of you. I will have to go on blood pressure medication if you take this route and if we have to argue all the time.

Shreyas: Mom, I eat healthy 21 times a week and eat 5 snacks with my friends. Not even full meals. I strongly believe that I am eating healthy food.

Mithra: You don't understand the importance of healthy eating when you are young. Why don't you both listen to me? Oh my God. My heart is racing.

Vikas: Mithra, sit down. Here you drink this glass of water. Count to 10. With all this focus on the health of children, you are losing your health. We both need to realize that children need to socialize a bit. Let it go.

QUESTIONS:

1. How do you balance your knowledge of providing healthy, home-cooked meals with your child's needs, and also fit in with their peers?
2. How can parents become positive influence in their children's eating habits?
3. How can parents recognize when their own stress or expectations are escalating the situation, and what strategies can help them self-regulate?
4. What parental compromises could support your child's growing independence?

SWAMI SAYS ...

Recognize the great potentials of the child; adopt such methods as the child himself might suggest or indicate.... Do not presume that the child is some inferior personality or that is incapable of attaining the heights.

- Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 12, Discourse 43, July 1974.

WRAPPING UP ...

- Facilitator to summarize the highlights from discussions as well as individual reflections [Brief takeaway by facilitator.]
- Reflections- request attendees to share anything that was interesting or intriguing or inspiring. Reflective prompt: *Let's go around and quickly hear from everyone in one or two words, your takeaway from today's Parenting session.*
- Commitment- Let us, as parents, commit to modeling mindful choices and nurturing a home where contentment, simplicity, and shared values guide our family life.