

Dump the Guilt with Reality-Based Meal Planning

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Moms—or dads—can feel guilty and worry about our children more than is productive. And the massive volume of “expert” advice that is so pervasive in our culture fuels these feelings. So, it’s easy to understand that when we feed our child something we perceive to be less than healthy, we feel guilty.

Well, there is a way to keep your family fueled with nutritious food and still live guilt-free. It’s called reality-based meal planning. As with many aspects of parenting, there is a wide gap between our ideal and reality. The key is learning the difference.

Here are a few examples to get you started:

Ideal #1: Serve balanced meals most days (meals with one food from each food group).

Reality: You don’t have time to cook every night.

Solution: If you must get fast food, just get the entrée from the drive through and bring it home. At home, serve milk, fruit and baby carrots. A balanced meal!

Ideal #2: Avoid all processed foods. Serve only food your grandmother would recognize.

Reality: Your kids are all on different sports teams and you don’t have time to cook from scratch and get them to practice.

Solution: There are many solutions—cooking ahead on the weekend, letting older children prepare meals one night a week or doing something simple by combining fresh or frozen veggies into a prepared entrée.

Try the [Food Personality Quiz](#) to find ways to prepare meals that match your cooking style.

Ideal #3: Your child loves a wide variety of foods including vegetables.

Reality: Your child eats a very small number of foods and shuns all vegetables.

Solution: You might need to lighten up. When kids feel too much pressure they tend to do the opposite. [Ellyn Satter](#), MS, RD, LCSW, BCD provides some excellent guidelines on how to help children to develop into “[good eaters](#)”.

It is important to give yourself permission to be a “good enough” mom, when it comes to food as well as every aspect of parenting. Perfection is not required. Just love, patience and continued “small steps” toward your ideal.

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