

## Practicing Gratitude: A little dinner conversation



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# RECONNECT WITH YOUR FAMILY OVER DINNER

*After a long day of work, school, errands and after-school activities, dinnertime can be a great opportunity to reconnect as a family. But sometimes, it can be tough to know where to begin. Here are some helpful ideas for getting the conversation started.*



Dinnertime is tricky at our house. My husband doesn't get home from work until just after six o'clock, and our kids go to bed at 7:30, so our window for dinnertime is pretty tight. I've gotten in the habit of feeding the kids before their dad gets home just to make things easier.

But lately, I've begun to feel like we're missing out on an important opportunity to reconnect with one another, so I'm on a mission to redefine dinnertime for our family.

**Why it's so important to make family mealtime a priority**

Charlotte Reznick, Ph.D., child educational psychologist, Associate Clinical Professor of Psychology at UCLA, and author of the *Los Angeles Times*' best-selling book *The Power of Your Child's Imagination: How to Transform Stress and Anxiety into Joy and Success*, explains **why it's so important** we come together for mealtime at the end of the day: "Family dinners can be a loving, predictable routine that make kids feel safe and cherished. It's wonderful to know there is something you can always count on, even when there's so much unpredictability and change in our fast-paced lives."

Dr. Reznick goes on to explain "it's crucial to think about what's key to your family -- what your values are -- and come up with a workable solution."

[How to find time for family dinners >>](#)

### Our workable solution

#### Set a realistic goal

For our family, setting a goal of sitting down at the table together four nights a week is doable. For some families, it might be three nights and for others, maybe even every night will work.

#### Turn off the phones

To make dinnertime the best bonding experience, we turn off our phones. This is a tough thing for me to do, but having it on is simply too distracting for me.

#### Recap our day

We take turns sharing the best part of our day and since our son, Matthew, isn't talking yet, our daughter shares what she thinks he loved most. Though I can't wait to hear Matthew's thoughts, I love hearing about his day through her eyes.

#### Express gratitude

Once we share the highlights from our day, we each share one thing for which we're grateful. So far, we've heard about gratitude for such things as pink cupcakes, easy commutes and extra books at bedtime. Hearing what makes each of us grateful is a great way to understand one another even better.

#### Stay put

The last thing we're doing is staying in our seats until the last of us finishes eating so no one rushes through and runs off too soon.

Although it certainly takes a bit more effort to sit down as a family, we're already seeing just how much of a difference it makes for ours.