

Families sharing meals have happier kids

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An Emory University study shows families regularly sharing evening meals have children who have higher self-esteem and interact better with their peers.

The research by two Emory University psychology professors suggests families who regularly eat meals together have children who know more about their family history and tend to have higher self-esteem, interact better with their peers and show higher resilience in the face of adversity.

In addition, the researchers say they determined families who openly discuss emotions associated with negative events, such as the death of a relative or a pet, have children with higher self-esteem and sense of control.

The findings come from Emory psychology professors Robyn Fivush and Marshall Duke, faculty fellows at the Emory Center for Myth and Ritual in American Life.

The three-year study focused on 40 families from Atlanta who tape recorded dinnertime conversations and later answered questions that allowed researchers to measure how well each family functions.

Duke worries that many families have abandoned the family meal, and may be losing the benefits that help nurture resilient children. "The time we spend with the family at the dinner times should be held sacred," he says.

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