

Table for Two: Family Dinners Also Good for Couples

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Families who eat together are more likely to stay together, as the saying goes. One University of Missouri researcher has discovered that the importance of mealtime also applies to newlywed couples, not just families with children.

After surveying 1,000 newlyweds, David Schramm, assistant professor of human development and family studies in the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences, discovered that the No. 1 complaint for newly married couples was balancing both jobs and “togetherness” time.

“There are so many demands for our time and the first thing to go are meals together,” said Schramm, who also is an MU Extension state specialist.

Schramm said that while more couples are dining out, simply eating together may not be enough. The tasks surrounding mealtime—food preparation and clean up—also can be beneficial to a relationship.

“The purpose of the task is not just to get the task done, but also to strengthen the relationship with time spent together,” Schramm said.

Couples who start this pattern before having children are more likely to eat together when they do have children. According to the American Dietetic Association, children who regularly eat meals with their families eat more fruits and vegetables and less saturated fat than children who do not. Studies from The National Center on Addiction and Substance

Abuse show that teens who eat dinner with their parents six times a week are less likely to smoke cigarettes or marijuana and less likely to consume alcohol. Eating as a family helps foster a sense of connectedness in the family, and provides an ideal setting for adults to encourage positive communication and social skills in their children.

Whether there are six chairs around the table or two, one piece of advice remains the same: turn off the television.

“Eating together in front of the TV is crowding out family. It’s time to excuse the TV. It’s not welcome at the dinner table,” Schramm said.

Provided by University of Missouri

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