

# COOL CAFE NEWSLETTER:

## Week #6: Promoting Healthy Eating!

### THEME:

Promoting healthy eating for physical and mental health!

### CONSIDER THIS!

- Acknowledge differences in rates of growth and development during early adolescence. This may result in certain students feeling like they don't 'fit in' or being teased if they are either under- or over-developed for their age.
- Weight insecurities may develop so it's important to communicate 'health at any weight' concepts. Being physically fit needs to be the focus versus being 'thin'.

#### Let's Chat About Mental Health:

- Adolescent bodies are growing at different rates. It is important to discuss how to take care of one's physical and mental health by eating a variety of healthy foods (e.g. fruits, vegetables, lean protein) and not just focusing on outward appearance.
- Promoting a healthy relationship with food in the lunchroom is vital. Help youth develop healthy feelings about their bodies as well because 60.1% of middle school students have body image dissatisfaction (Latiff, 2018). Value the fact that we all come in 'different sizes'!

### TIPS

#### Develop healthy relationships with food

- Avoid labeling food as 'good' or 'bad'; instead think about how food choices makes one feel after its been eaten. Reinforce healthy thinking, such as:
  - "My body runs longer throughout the day after eating protein, fruits, vegetables and complex carbs."
  - 'Sipping water throughout the day helps to my body stay hydrated.'
  - 'Snacking on raisins, dates, or peanuts can be as satisfying as eating less nutritious snacks like cookies.'

#### Try it you'll like it: Introduce fruits and vegetables of all shapes and colors

- Encourage tasting, but don't force students to eat new foods. Let students know that tasting new foods increases the likelihood that they'll expand their food interests.
- Eat a rainbow: Help students taste a variety of healthy foods representing different colors and textures (e.g. kiwi, hummus, broccoli, cantaloupe, avocado, etc.)

## Develop an understanding of nutritional value of food and its effect on physical and mental health

- Natural and/or organic vs artificial ingredients
- Whole foods vs processed
- Nutrient dense (fruits, nuts) vs empty calories (cookies, soda, candy)

### Supervisor Activities:

- Keep it positive!
  - Avoid negative language around less healthy foods such as 'bad' or 'fattening'. It's not the type of food that's bad, it's the amount and how often the food is eaten that can be problematic. Refer to these foods as "occasional" or "extra". Everything in moderation!
  - Focus on the positives food can do (make them stronger, think clearer, run faster, etc.)
- Ask students what new food they'd like to try at home or at school
  - See if PTA/PTO has funding for a "Taste Test" day or "Sample Fresh Foods" table to be offered at school.
- Pass out nutrition labels and have the students answer various questions in groups to expand students' ability to read and understand the labels.

### Student Activities:

- Food tasting:
  - As a part of Week 6, bring in healthy and unique foods for students to eat and talk about. Examples include: hummus and veggies, sliced fruit (kiwis, pineapple, strawberries), dried fruit, etc.
  - Have students make their own tasty wrap, trail mix, or yogurt parfait from the food provided
- Jot down all the food they ate for three days
  - Observe what choices provided good sources of energy, fiber, vitamins, and minerals vs the choices that did not provide the most nutritional value
  - Have the students determine ways to increase nutritional dense foods into their bodies
- Have students write positive messages on bananas and oranges.

### Resources

Latiff, A., Muhamad, J., & Rahman, R.A. (2018). Body image dissatisfaction and its determinants among young primary-school adolescents. *Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences*, 13(1), 34-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtumed.2017.07.003>

Developed for Every Moment Counts ([www.everymomentcounts.org](http://www.everymomentcounts.org))

Every Moment Counts is committed to building capacity of all school personnel, families, and community providers to promote children's mental health and contribute to prevention and intervention of mental health challenges through professional education, website resources, and coaching.

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