

# PULL IT TOGETHER: FOOD, FUN, FITNESS AND HEALTHY-LIVING WISDOM FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

# EXPERIENCE LIFE

Healthy.  
Happy.

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## CHALLENGE 1:

### WHEN I MAKE HEALTHY FOOD, MY FAMILY WON'T EAT IT.

When I hear complaints from my two daughters about a healthy dish I prepare, my gut response is to get bossy: *Eat it because it's good for you, because I cooked it... and because I say so!* That's normal, but not necessarily effective, says therapist Donna Fish, MS, LCSW, author of *Take the Fight Out of Food: How to Prevent and Solve Your Child's Eating Problems* (Atria, 2005). A more valuable (and more satisfying) approach involves helping our kids make healthy choices on their own.

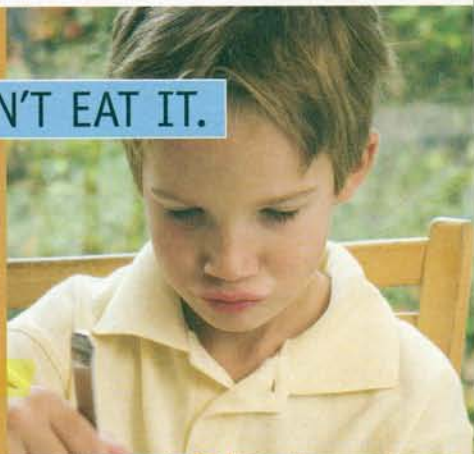
By educating our kids to make informed food-selection decisions and by involving them in the food-selection and food-prep process (more on that in a moment), we can empower them to eat better now, and for a lifetime.

Even young children can learn to understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods. To help them grasp why a favorite junk food is discouraged, suggests Fish (a mom of three), explain something like the following: "This may make your tastebuds and tummy happy right now, but it won't provide good fuel to help your body do your favorite things."

Or you can recall an experience they've had with an unhealthy food: "Remember when you had only candy and cake at that party and came home so cranky and tired?" You can add more specific nutrition information as a child gets older, explaining how certain ingredients affect their bodies and minds, for better or for worse.

Visit [www.wholefamilyfitness.com](http://www.wholefamilyfitness.com) for more tips on making food life easier by removing the most common barriers to healthy eating.

A good way to start resetting kids' taste buds is to lead by example — wherever you are on the healthy-eating spectrum. "Parents don't have to have the best eating habits before beginning changes," says therapist Fish. "In fact, your children will appreciate your honesty in acknowledging how hard it is to cut back on certain →



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## CHALLENGE 5:

### I CAN'T CONTROL WHAT MY FAMILY EATS AWAY FROM HOME.

True enough. But you can equip your kids with food-choice skills and values they will use all their lives. And if they experiment a little, it's not the end of the world. What they eat and learn at home will always help set the stage for their food choices elsewhere. "Keep the focus on the fact that they are in charge of their bodies all the time, even when they're away from you," says Fish.

Find ways to illustrate the fact that there's a direct link between healthy food and fueling the body, she advises. "A child is going to be more motivated to make good choices when he really gets that connection." Kids want to be the best they can be at the activities they are passionate about — from soccer and dance to playing hide-and-seek in the yard and reading a good book (healthy food, healthy choices).

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answer to a healthy way of life.™