



Cooked up by AAPI Montclair

Talking with Your Child about Food Acceptance and Lunch Shaming

A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

1. Take some time to talk with your child about their lunch experience. It is helpful to acknowledge their feelings and process the experience with them. Example:

CHILD: Someone made fun of my lunch today and said it looks gross.

PARENT/CAREGIVER: I'm sorry this happened to you. I understand it might have made you upset. No food is gross. Everyone just likes to eat different types of foods and some foods look different than others. (If your child is responsive, you could further explain food diversity and culture.)

2. Sometimes children may feel shame or embarrassment about their foods and/or cultures, especially when criticized or judged by peers. To counter this, it could be helpful to engage in activities at home that explain and celebrate your culture and foods. Why do you prepare the foods you do? How do they connect to your family's history and heritage?
3. Invite your children to help prepare or cook food with you or other relatives. This way they can understand the process, including the time and love that is put into preparing the food, and know what ingredients are included in case they are asked and feel like sharing with others.
4. Have conversations with your child about the variety of cuisines that exist in every culture, and how each is connected to one's culture or country of origin. This can help foster their respect for others' foods and backgrounds, as well as help them to understand or explain to others (should they wish to) why their food may look, smell or taste different than others.
5. Please listen to and respect your child's wishes if there are certain foods that they prefer to eat at home, rather than bring to school.
6. Celebrate your culture with your children. Teach your children to take pride in their roots, their traditions, practices and food!