

## The Family Meal

Hello and welcome to our first installment of our Student Services Parenting Tips Corner.

Dr. Leonard Sax addresses the issue of the Family Meal in his book [The Collapse of Parenting](#). According to Sax, the family meal is in great danger. He defines the meal as sitting around the table together eating and conversing (no radio, tv or phones allowed). Thanks to this practice, parents have a much better sense of what's going on in their children's lives. In a Canadian study, children whose families ate together regularly were less likely to feel sad, anxious and lonely. They also were less likely to demonstrate aggression, skipping school and stealing. There was even a difference between eating together 5 days per week vs 6 or 7. In addition, children who eat with their parents are less likely to become obese. The family meal also serves as a teaching process. Children are learning proper manners, how to wait their turn and communication skills. It's a natural setting to learn new expressions, current events, debate skills and vocabulary. Around the world, it's interesting to note that Americans are spending significantly less time having family meals. Sax notes though that in Europe, the opposite is true. In fact, time is even given in many countries for lunch hours together as well as dinner! Sax recommends that we fight for every possible meal together. If your dinner has to involve take-out or a Michelina's frozen meal, don't worry! It is not what you are eating; it is the idea that the family is eating *together*. So, in today's society where children are often involved in extra-curricular activities, how does that play out? This will be the subject of our next discussion.