



# Meaningful Meals from Parent Up

**Study after study has made it clear that having regular unplugged meals together as a family is linked to behaviors all parents want in their kids:**

- Lower rates of substance use and depression,
- Better peer relationships,
- More self-esteem,
- and even better grades!

**Mealtime may be the only time for families to connect, debrief, relax and recharge.** Having meals together leads to better connection between parents and kids, allows parents to catch concerns and kids to express needs, and creates bonding and trust!

**Parent Up encourages you to make your meaningful meal time happen. Here's a few hints to make meal times feasible, frequent, and fun:**

- Research suggests that the more families eat together, the better. Try to eat together at least four meals per week for a minimum of 20 minutes each.
- It doesn't have to be dinner! Meaningful meals can happen over breakfast or an after-school or late night snack.
- Connection is the key. With so much going on around us, use mealtime to unplug, connect, debrief, relax, and recharge. Leave the phones and other electronics behind and connect with people who are present.

## Make An Unplugged Box!

All too often, screens, alerts, pings and dings interrupt family meal time. Make your meals more meaningful by creating a designated place where devices are kept during this intentional time, like an Unplugged Box!

### To Make An Unplugged Box:

**1. Pitch the idea:** Talk to your kids and spouse/partner (yes, adults need to unplug too) and get their buy in for having an unplugged box. Tell them your hopes and dreams of finding time to connect over meals. Ask them to help you create the box and set the expectations for where and how you'll use the box. If this is a new practice for your family, consider starting slow (10 minutes of unplugged time at meals, etc.). Decide what devices are going to be silenced to reduce interruptions. Don't forget about tv, tablets, and smart watches too.

**2. Find a box:** Find a shoebox or any other unused box from around your house that is sturdy enough and big enough to hold your family's devices. Or, purchase a sturdy box from a craft store or dollar store. Use a box that is at least 8 inches long and 4 inches wide if you want it to hold multiple devices and tablets. Getting a box with slats or cutting holes into your box allows the devices to be charged while they're in your Unplugged Box.

**3. Decorate the box with sayings, pictures, and quotes.** Use any of these sayings below, or create your own theme, quotes, and pictures:

- Be Present with the People Who Are Here
- Unplug: It's family time!
- The \_\_\_ Family is Unplugged
- Unplugged Box: A Mobile Home for Your Mobile Phone!
- Take a break and unplug here!
- We love family time!

**4. Put your Unplugged Box to use!** If this is a new practice, it might be hard at first, but you and your family are adaptable and YOU CAN DO IT! If you're struggling to make mealtime meaningful, visit our resources and tips at [ParentUpKC.com](http://ParentUpKC.com)!



### Parent UP Can Help!

Visit [ParentUpKC.com](http://ParentUpKC.com) for resources for better connection, printable conversation cards, and recipe ideas! Find our **Meaningful Meals Kit** under the Tools tab!

