



PARTNERSHIP PAGE

Thoughts and facts about learning, parenting, and working together for the Christian education of your children.

This week, we feature the rest of the Scholastic interview with Dr. David Walsh, where he talks about building self-esteem in kids . . . the right way.

It's Okay to Say No (Continued . . .)

BY SCHOLASTIC PARENTS STAFF

SP: We know self-esteem is important. How has the concept become distorted?

Walsh: Real self-esteem is very important, but it's built through support, connection, and competence. Self-esteem is not a new idea, but it was mis-defined in popular culture during the 1970s and '80s. We got the idea that self-esteem comes first, and behavior comes second. In other words, if we feel good about ourselves, we'll behave ourselves. There's no evidence to prove that. It's important for kids to feel good about themselves, but people translated that to mean self-esteem means feeling good all the time.

SP: In what ways can parents help their children build real self-esteem?

Walsh: Instead of doing things for our kids, we need to support and encourage them to do things for themselves. We can't just tell our kids that they are good and capable — we need to give them experiences where they can actually **be** those things. In this culture we tend to think that self-esteem comes first, and then competence will follow, but actually it's the other way around. For instance, if a child knows how to cooperate and get along with others, he'll have more friends, and he's going to feel good about himself.

SP: What other values do you feel kids need?

Walsh: A sense of compassion. When self-esteem gets distorted, kids end up with an over-inflated sense of their own worth and entitlement. Compassion means that I put other people's needs and rights on par with my own, and kids need to learn that.

The full article can be found here: <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/family-life/parent-child/its-okay-to-say-no.html>

David Walsh, Ph.D. is an award winning psychologist, best selling author, and international speaker. In 1995, he founded the internationally renowned National Institute on Media and the Family, which he led until 2010. In 2011 he founded Mind Positive Parenting to translate cutting edge brain science to everyday practice for parents, teachers and other professionals.

Dr. Walsh has written ten books including the national best sellers *Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen* and *No: Why Kids – of All Ages – Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say It*. His books have been translated into eight languages. He has also authored scores of papers for professional and general publications. His newest book is *Smart Parenting, Smarter Kids*.

He has been a frequent guest on national radio and television programs. He has testified numerous times before Congress, presented workshops throughout the world, and served as a consultant to the World Health Organization and the Ministries of Education in Japan, South Korea, Portugal and Singapore. He and his wife Monica have three adult children and seven grandchildren.



We recently sent out a Facebook challenge to all of you to share the fun you have been having with your kids while preparing meals together. **Thank you for your submissions!** If preparing and sitting down to meals together is a rare thing in your family, you may be interested in the compelling list of benefits researchers are finding which come from eating family

meals together. There are STACKS of studies out there – enough now that we KNOW it really makes a difference!

Here are some **learning** benefits of eating meals together often as a family.

Conversation at the dinner table is *even better than reading* to children in boosting their vocabulary and helping them to read.

There is a strong link between family dinners and academic performance, *even stronger* than doing homework, sports, or art.

Teens who eat regular family dinners are more likely to get A's in school.

Professor Anne Fishel elaborates in her blog at <https://theconversation.com> :

Science says: eat with your kids

As a family therapist, I often have the impulse to tell families to go home and have dinner together rather than spending an hour with me. And 20 years of research in North America, Europe and Australia back up my enthusiasm for family dinners. It turns out that sitting down for a nightly meal is great for the brain, the body and the spirit. And that nightly dinner doesn't have to be a gourmet meal that took three hours to cook, nor does it need to be made with organic arugula and heirloom parsnips.



Brain food

For starters, researchers found that for young children, **dinnertime conversation boosts vocabulary** even more than being read aloud to. The researchers counted the number of rare words – those not found on a list of 3,000 most common words – that the families used during dinner conversation. Young kids learned 1,000 rare words at the dinner table, compared to only 143 from parents reading storybooks aloud. Kids who have a large vocabulary read earlier and more easily. Older children also reap intellectual benefits from family dinners. For school-age youngsters, regular mealtime is an even more powerful predictor of **high achievement scores** than time spent in school, doing homework, playing sports or doing art.

Other researchers reported a consistent association between family dinner frequency and teen academic performance. Adolescents who ate family meals 5 to 7 times a week were **twice as likely to get A's** in school as those who ate dinner with their families fewer than two times a week.

(Next week: *health* benefits of family dinners.)

Author: Anne Fishel, Associate Clinical Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School, Harvard University
Anne Fishel is a co-founder of a non-profit organization, The Family Dinner Project.