

Collection: GROW AND ENJOY

Today I'm eating at school!



PROLOGUE

Raising our children to be healthy and strong is a job that we all have to contribute to. Getting involved in their diet and in promoting healthy living habits should be a ‘team task’, since it is at the earliest ages that children should acquire these habits. For this reason, we should provide them with the tools and knowledge necessary for these good practices to become future attitudes.

Together with families, school lunchrooms play an important role in providing these tools and in spreading a healthy lifestyle. Learning how to eat well and having an active lifestyle can prevent future diseases, like obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

In a society in which 43% of the children are overweight, correct nutrition and regular exercise are considered to be fundamental pillars for minimizing the possible negative effects of an overweight or obese population. A healthy, balanced diet containing all of the nutrients and with set eating frequencies will favour our health and that of our children, while at the same time allowing for greater physical and intellectual performance.

It’s a question of making slight changes to our daily lives: choosing what we eat better, taking care of how we prepare it, awakening the curiosity of the youngest children with new, fun ways of preparing dishes that entice them into trying new tastes... It is undeniable that having a wide, varied supply of food is the best way to teach them how to eat.

It is important for us parents to practise what we preach. Children learn and adopt a large part of their behaviour through imitation, so our ways of eating will significantly influence our children’s ways of eating. Setting rules of behaviour at the table, establishing time slots and places in which we eat, and promoting the participation of children in the preparation of dishes are some of the things we can do to get them involved and make them understand the importance of a proper diet from an early age.

Our children’s nutrition is a responsibility in which the family and the school environment must work hand in hand. This book aims to contribute to spreading good life habits and fostering a healthy lifestyle among the youngest children, because acquiring these good customs will help them have better health in the future.

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Julia jumped out of bed. The night before, she had had trouble falling asleep, but she didn't feel any laziness when her alarm clock went off. She was a little nervous because today was her first day in her new school. And most importantly: for the first time, she was going to stay at school for lunch!

After getting dressed, she went to the kitchen, where her parents were already preparing breakfast.

'Did you sleep well?' asked her mother.

'I woke up a few times,' Julia answered while she poured juice into the glasses. 'I'm worried about lunchtime. I read on the menu that they're going to be serving vegetables, and I don't know if I'm going to like them...'

TIP 1: REST!

Sleeping the necessary number of hours helps replenish the energy we use up during the day. While we sleep, our body and mind continue to work to maintain our well-being. When we rest enough, we get up active and with vitality. Resting and sleeping are also ways of taking care of yourself. Your mind and body will thank you!



It had only been a week since Julia and her parents had moved to their new city. Before, they had lived near her grandparents, and she had gone to their place for lunch every day.

'I think I'm going to miss having lunch with Grandma Rosa,' she commented with nostalgia.

'I'd give the school lunch a chance,' said her father, giving her a wink.

'They've told me that the cook has a special gift for making dishes turn out really well.'

Julia drank her orange juice and finished her biscuits and yoghurt. She put an apple in her backpack for recess and said good-bye to her parents, promising to tell them how her first day had gone when she got home from school.

TIP 2: EAT FIVE TIMES A DAY

Eating five times a day is a very healthy habit for replenishing the energy that we use up during the day. Remember to have a complete breakfast before leaving home, have a varied lunch at midday, and eat easily digestible food for supper. In the mid-morning and in the afternoon have a snack, for example: a small sandwich, some juice, a piece of fruit or some yoghurt.

The first hours of the morning were pleasant. The teacher introduced her to the rest of the children in her class. She liked the classroom because it had a lot of sunlight and the walls were decorated with drawings and posters made by her classmates.

During recess, she went to the fountain to drink some water, and she sat on a bench to eat her fruit peacefully. Ivan, one of the boys in her class, sat down next to her.

'What do you think of the school?' he asked, smiling.

'It's very nice, and it's very big,' Julia replied. 'I like the fact that it is so colourful and that it's so well decorated.'

'Then you will love the lunchroom!' cried Ivan. 'Since we were celebrating the autumn festival last week, we decorated it with our monitors. There are colourful posters and a huge mural that we made all together.'

'What? Do you do arts and crafts in the lunchroom, too?' Julia asked in amazement.

'Yes, and we play games, and have contests... We even have dancing and costume-making workshops. You're going to like Susana and David a lot!'

TIP 3: DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Water is essential for the human body. Our muscles and organs need it in order to work properly. It's important to drink water after doing exercise and regularly throughout the day. Take advantage of recess and lunchtime to keep your body hydrated.

Ivan explained to her that Susana and David were the monitors who were in charge of them throughout the midday activities, not just while they were having lunch.



After the last morning class, the teacher told them to put away their pencil cases and notebooks. Julia remembered about the vegetables and began to get butterflies in her stomach; she was very nervous.

A tall, brunette girl and a freckled, red-headed boy were waiting at the door with a folder in their hands. They came into the classroom and, before taking roll, went up to her with a big smile on their faces.

'You must be Julia!' the boy observed. 'Welcome to the school. We're Susana and David, your lunchroom monitors. We'll be meeting every day at this time.'

'If we can help you in any way, don't hesitate to ask,' Susana said to her, patting her on her shoulder.

**TIP 4:
TRUST YOUR MONITORS!**

The monitors are the ones who are responsible for staying with you at lunchtime and during playtime afterwards. One of their functions is to help you acquire good habits at lunch. You'll learn a lot by listening to them and following their recommendations.



Julia noticed that the butterflies in her stomach had calmed down a bit. She liked how they took roll with a song and how her classmates got into line. Ivan gestured to her with his hand, and she lined up behind him.

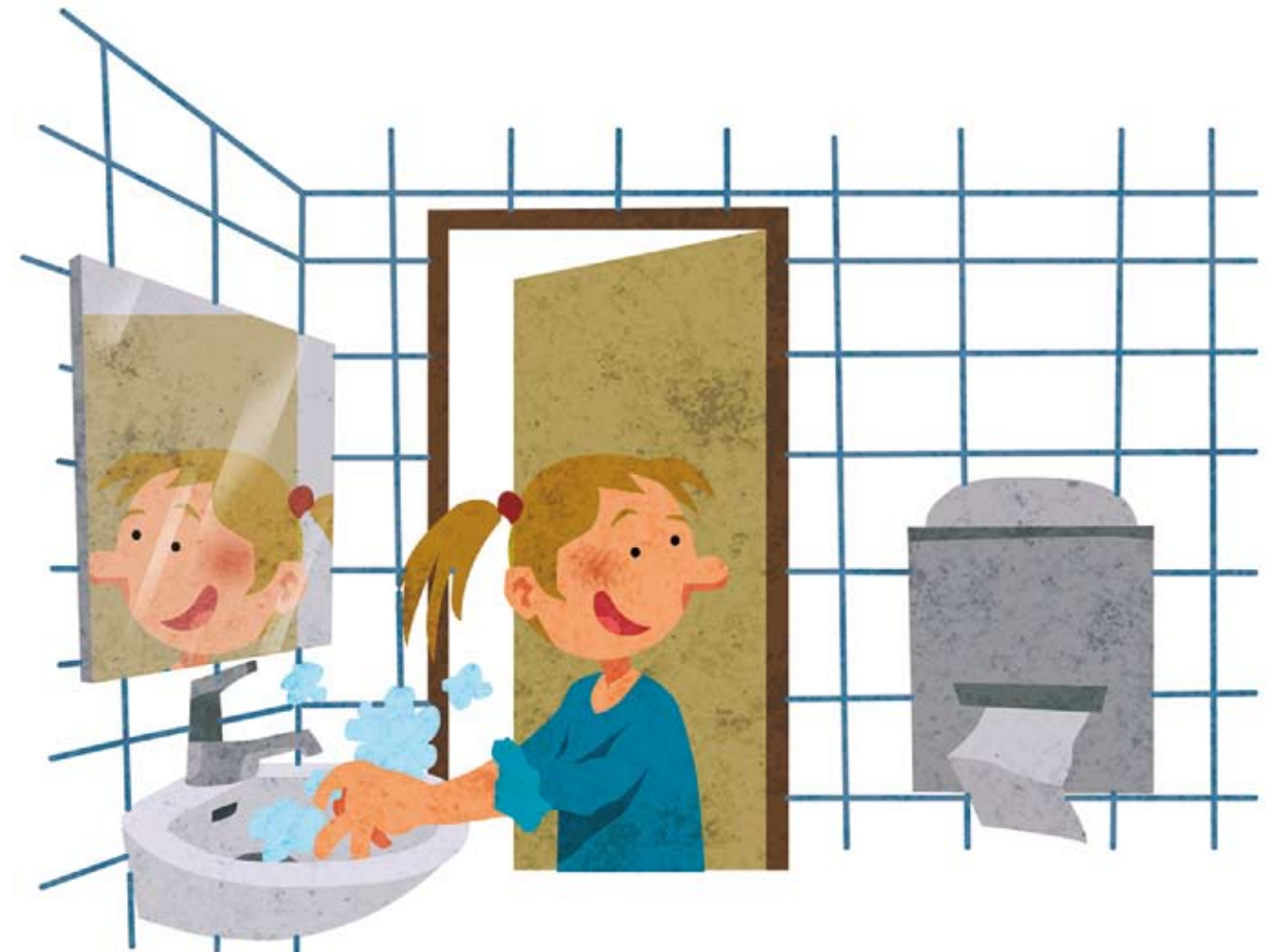
They walked down the hallway to the bathroom door.

'Before eating, we always wash our hands,' Ivan explained to her. 'It's important to have them clean!'



TIP 5: WASH YOUR HANDS!

Washing your hands before eating or cooking is an important habit to avoid spreading germs and diseases. Scrub them with soap and water without leaving any parts out: the palms, the backs, your fingers and your fingernails. Rinse them off with plenty of water and dry them. Don't forget to wash your hands after going to the bathroom, touching animals or blowing your nose. You'll be taking care of your health!



When the whole class had finished washing their hands, they continued on to the lunchroom. At the entrance hung a sign with a few pieces of advice: sit correctly, use your silverware and napkin right, chew with your mouth closed, keep your voice at a proper level and ask the monitors for things politely.

Julia read those rules with attention. They seemed important to her, so she tried to memorise them in order not to forget them and to be able to put them into practice.

Once inside, she was stunned. Ivan was right: the lunchroom looked like a forest in autumn. She was so amazed looking at the decorations that Susana took her hand and led her to her place at the table.

'I'm a little nervous...', she whispered. 'It's just that I don't like vegetables very much.'

Susana stayed by her side.



TIP 6:

COLLABORATE THROUGH YOUR BEHAVIOUR

It's necessary to follow the rules of the lunchroom in order for it to function well. Asking for things with 'please' and saying 'thank you', talking without yelling, and calmly chewing with your mouth closed are some of the things you can do to collaborate and create a good environment.

'I'm glad you told me,' she said affectionately. 'We all like some things more than others, but it's necessary to eat a good variety. All the different kinds of food are important for growing and being healthy: vegetables, fruit, cereals, legumes, dairy products, meat, fish... I'll tell you what,' Susana continued, 'we won't give you a lot, just enough so you can try them. Maybe their taste will surprise you!'

Julia thought it was a good idea to try it. At first, she picked up her fork hesitantly and watched the other boys and girls at her table out of the corner of her eye. They seemed to love that dish, so without giving it a second thought she tried a little. She tasted it slowly and discovered that it wasn't unpleasant at all. Quite the opposite, in fact! She immediately felt like continuing to eat.

TIP 7:
EAT A VARIETY OF FOOD TYPES

The foundation of good health is a balanced diet. Fruit, vegetables, legumes, cereals, dairy products, meat and fish are food types that can't be absent from your everyday diet, since they provide the necessary amount of nutrients for your well-being. Avoid too many sweets and too much fat, and don't forget to drink water. Discover the combinations that you like the most and enjoy variety!



While eating, David came up to her with a man and a woman wearing a white uniform.

'This is Julia,' he said to them. And talking to the girl he continued:

'Jesús and Belén are the school's cooks. They wanted to meet you and find out what you thought of the meal.'

Julia gave them a big smile.

'The vegetables are great!' she said happily.

Jesús broke into a big laugh.

'Thank you very much!'

Suddenly he lowered his voice:

'If you can keep a secret, I'll tell you that all of us cooks have one trick or another to make our recipes healthy and tasty.'

They said good-bye with a good shake of her hand when Julia started in on the main course.

**TIP 8:
PLAN YOUR DINNERS**

At suppertime, take into account what you ate at lunchtime so as not to repeat too many food types. Look at your school menu and collaborate in preparing dinner at home. Make varied proposals!





After finishing desserts, they cleaned off their table all together. Susana pointed at a sign with the word 'RECYCLING' on it. Below it there were several bins of different colours, one for each kind of waste material. 'Remember that each kind of waste material goes into its own bin: the yoghurt pots in the one for plastic, leftover food in the one for organics and napkins in the one for paper.'

TIP 9: RECYCLE CORRECTLY!

Recycling waste material well is very important in helping to take care of the environment. Notice the colours of the different bins: the green one is for glass; the yellow one is for plastic, cans and cartons; the brown one is for organic matter; and the blue one is for paper and cardboard. Join in in recycling!

When they went out into the playground, there was still an hour left before the afternoon classes would begin. Their monitors and those of the other classes got all of the students together in the middle of the basketball court.

'Today we propose something different. We've brought some parachutes to play with. Who wants to?'

The boys and girls all cried out and jumped for joy.

Ivan told Julia that the fun thing about these games was that no one loses: all of the participants were important for moving the colourful cloths and controlling the movement of objects and balls on them.

When it was time for Julia to go back to class, she already knew a lot of her schoolmates, some of whom were her age, others who were older and still others who were younger than her.

'Did you have a good time?' asked David before he said good-bye.

'Yes, a great time!' she replied, going into her classroom.

TIP 10: MOVE YOUR BODY

Physical exercise is fundamental for good health. When you move your body, you're helping it in its development, getting your whole organism to work. In addition, doing some kind of sport is a chance to have fun and share good times with other people. Make yourself active and get your body moving!



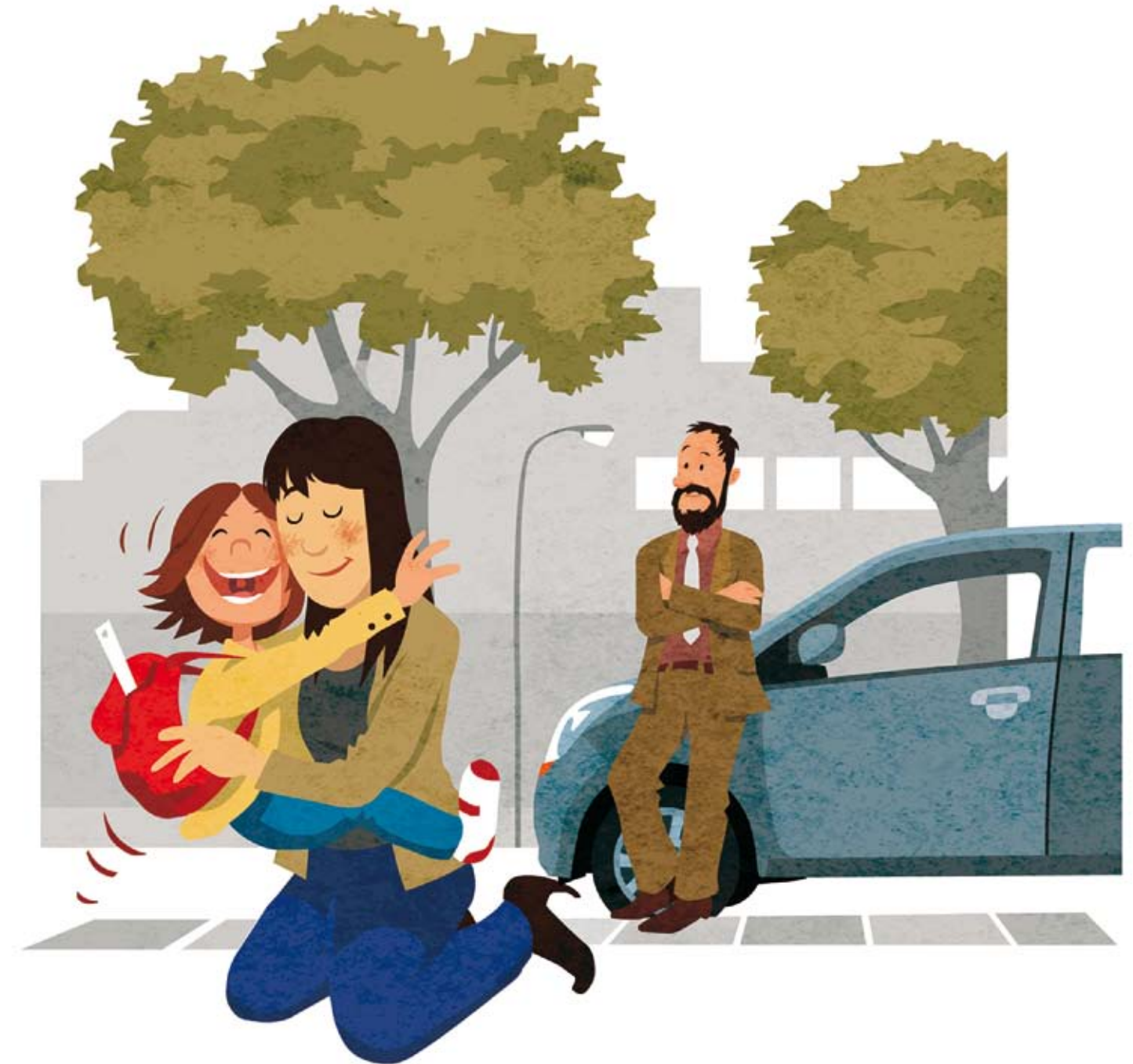
The afternoon flew by, and when Julia left the school her parents were waiting for her in suspense.

'How was your day?'

'I like this school, and I love its lunchroom!' Julia exclaimed while she hugged them. 'And I've discovered that vegetables can be really tasty... I have to tell you about everything that happened to me!'

**TIP 11:
EXPLORE NEW KINDS OF FOOD**

Be daring and try kinds of foods and recipes you've never eaten before. You'll find that most of them will surprise you, and you'll like them! Also use your senses of smell and sight to enjoy your food. Have a good time exploring new dishes!





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