

Touching Hearts Touching Minds Handout #19

Follow the Leader (Role modeling)

Counseling Tool

What is the key message?

- Children are “copycats.” They model the behaviors they see.
- Parents are their child’s first teacher of how to eat healthy foods.

Who should receive this message?

- Any parent or grandparent.

How can this message be used?

Open:

- Ask participants to say “silk” out loud in unison five times. Lead participants as they do this. Then ask: “What do cows drink? Most will say “silk” or “milk,” even though the correct answer is water.
- Read this Spanish proverb to participants: “Habits are at first cobwebs, then cables.” Ask participants to discuss what this means. Sample comments:
 - In the beginning, behaviors are easy to change.
 - Once formed, habits grip people and hold them captive, much like cables.
- Children eat 1,640 evening meals before the age of five. During that time, their eating habits are like cobwebs, easy to change. After five, their eating habits are more like cables, with powerful holds on their life and health.

Dig:

- Which of your children’s eating habits make you feel proud?
- What eating habits do you want to teach your child in the first five years?
- What *activity* habits do you want to teach your child during the first five years of life?
- When do you think you should start teaching your child eating habits?
- Do you have eating or activity habits that you are hoping your child won’t copy? What are they?
- Do you have habits you want your child to copy?

Connect:

- How much control do parents have over their children’s eating habits?
- In what ways can parents be more influential?
- Some parents think that they can teach their children something that they can’t or won’t do themselves. What do you think about that?



Act:

- What will you do *today* to establish the eating and activity habits you hope will be as strong as cables throughout your child's life?
- What eating or activity habits will you model for your children during the next week, with the hopes that those behaviors become cables throughout your child's life?

