

How Staff Can Support a Healthy Eating Environment

Are you sometimes confused about how to encourage a healthy food environment at your Residential College?



Staff of residential colleges are in a unique position where they are not parents, but they are responsible for ensuring that students feel safe and supported to enjoy mealtimes.

Here are our top six tips for supporting students at mealtimes.

1. Avoid pressure



Both positive (praising, reminding, bribing and rewarding) and negative (restricting amounts or types of food, coaxing, punishing, criticising, begging, withholding dessert) pressure can cause unwanted stress at mealtimes. Let the students enjoy their meal without any pressure.



3. Don't insist students finish their food
Allow them to eat according to hunger and appetite.



2. Be a role model
Sit down and eat with the students. Seeing adults eating and enjoying a wide variety of foods and demonstrating good table manners will encourage them to do the same.



4. Accept that you cannot please every eater at every meal
Ensure there is a variety of foods on offer at each mealtime. Remind yourself that over time, students will learn to choose from what is offered.



5. Variety is key
Include a variety of different foods at each meal e.g., meat or alternatives such as legumes; grain foods such as bread, rice or pasta; fruit; vegetables; and dairy such as milk, cheese or yoghurt.



6. Get the students involved
Cooking and/or preparing food with teenagers can spark their interest in the relationship between the food they eat and their health and wellbeing. It also supports the development of life long healthy eating habits.