

MARRY, DATE, OR DITCH

CLIENT	BEHAVIORS	TOOLS
Parents of children older than 1	Eat more vegetables	Marry, Date, or Ditch signs Client Gift: Cauliflower Popcorn recipe card

TOOLS



OPENING ACTIVITY

Give each parent a set of “marry, date, or ditch” signs. Tell them you will share different ideas for getting toddlers to eat fruits and veggies—but you want their feedback on how likely they are to try each idea. After you explain each idea, you will ask them to hold up one of the signs. If they will definitely use the idea, they will hold up their “marry” sign. If they are willing to give the idea a try, they will hold up their “date” sign. If they are sure the idea won’t work for them or their family, they will hold up the “ditch” sign.

Strategy #1: Use positive labels around your children.

Parents’ words have power. Children live up to the labels given to them. Children labeled as “picky eaters” or “veggie haters” often live up to the label assigned to them and choose not to eat veggies or a wide variety of foods. Children labeled as “veggie lovers or adventurous eaters (—always willing to try new foods)” will live up to those labels.

Ask parents to show their “marry, date or ditch” signs and have them explain how they feel about using positive labels to encourage fruit and veggies.

Discussion starters:

- What positive labels do you want to use for your children to encourage them to be adventurous eaters who try veggies and fruits?
- How will it make a difference in your child’s life if he/she grew up loving fruit and veggies?

Conclude with words like this:

“Words are like seeds. When parents give labels, they go deep in the soil of the heart and become something important—something that stays with them for life.”

Rename veggies:

Kids are much more likely to try veggies that have a fun name. Rename veggies with names like these:

“X-ray Vision Carrots”	“Mini Moons” (Brussels sprouts)	“Muscle Mushrooms”
“Character Carrots” (carve eyes/nose/mouth into carrot to make a face.)	“Mini Marbles” (peas)	“Captain (or Kernel) Corn”
“Power Punch Broccoli”	“Green Pearls” (peas)	“Shazam (or Popeye’s) Spinach”
“Tiny Tasty Tree Tops” (broccoli)	“Lettuce Have Fun”	“Squishy Squash”
“Silly Dilly Green Beans”	“Pow-Pow Peppers”	“Cauliflower Ears”

Ask parents to show their “marry, date or ditch” signs. Then, brainstorm other fun names for veggies.

Strategy #2: Tell children what they *can* eat rather than what they *can’t* eat.

“Do” messages work better than “don’t” messages. Examples: “Enjoy this crunchy carrot” is better than “Don’t eat that candy.” Also, tell kids why the good foods are good for them.

Example: ‘Green pearls’ make your tummy happy and help you grow strong” is better than “Candy will make you fat.”

Ask parents to show their “marry, date or ditch” signs and discuss how they might reinvent different messages for their children.

Strategy #3: Serve a new kind of popcorn as a movie treat.

Offer Cauliflower Popcorn as a family treat—without mentioning it is a vegetable. Toss small cauliflower florets with a small amount of olive oil—about two tablespoons. Roast at 450°F for twenty minutes, stirring a few times until cauliflower is browned. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese. Lightly season and serve.

Ask parents to show their “marry, date or ditch” signs, and have them share other ideas for serving veggies in non-traditional ways.

Strategy #4: The 10-Minute Guideline for parents.

Children can only eat veggies if their parents buy them. Shoppers who spend 10 minutes in the produce section of the grocery store are much more likely to buy vegetables and fruit than those who breeze through it.

Ask parents to show their “marry, date or ditch” signs and discuss what they can talk about with their children while in the produce section on their next trip to the grocery store.

ACTION PLAN

How would it make a difference in your life if your children became veggie and fruit lovers?

Which of the ideas shared today are ones you are willing to try this week?