

# Fundas from the family table

Mealtime togetherness at home can create achievers, says research. *BT* explores

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Times News Network

EATING dinner together may be a thing of the past in many families, but going by new studies, this practice now needs a re-think. A recent Who's Who survey shows that 66 per cent of top students say

that they ate dinner with their families on a regular basis. The American Psychological Association also published a study sometime ago which illustrated the crucial role of the family meal in the lives of teenagers. The study found that teenagers with better relationships and more academic motivation ate dinner with their families an average of five days a week. As experts say, "The organised family meal's main ingredient — communication — is one key to raising emotionally healthy children."

Among Bangaloreans, the trend holds just as good. Ace swimmer Nisha Millet places her success firmly on strong family bonds. "As far back as I can remember, my family has always eaten dinner together," she says. "After a whole day out, this was a time for

bonding, talking about the day and listening to what everyone had to say. We shared our problems and felt better after talking about them. Our parents were always there to motivate and

## SOUL FOOD



help us along."

Photography expert Waseem Khan can never forget how his mother used to make a big deal about having dinner together. "During her childhood, her father used to

make it mandatory for every child to be present at the table for every meal," he says. "If they were five minutes late, they were sent back to their rooms without food. Of course, my mother was not so strict but she made sure we ate dinners together. These rituals make youngsters more stable and centred. The closeness makes a huge difference in any child. Today, I'm a much more family-oriented person and I love spending quality time with them."

Model Pashmeena Barker remembers how Sunday used to be family day and every evening they would eat together. "This ritual was not forced upon us but it was something we looked forward to. It was a time we would catch up with each other's lives. I went on to do well in college and I often think, my

family's support has helped me even today," she says.

Child counsellor Meer Ravi believes that spending time with the family makes youngsters feel validated as they grow up to be more stable. "A family dinner meets lot of needs of the child — like the need for love, attention and belonging. The more needs that are met, the more young person is happy. They will have much more motivation and enthusiasm. I have met so many young kids suffering from depression. Most of them don't have meals with their families together — even if they go for the tuitions, attend the schools, they don't do well in their studies. Spending time together with the family makes a world of a difference in a person's life."

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