

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - No. 1 parenting educator



The power of the kitchen table

“It’s no coincidence that those countries with strong food cultures also have strong families. When people eat together they talk. You can’t help but talk when your behind is anchored to a chair.”

The kitchen table is a parent’s best friend. It’s where conversations occur. It’s where thoughts are aired, complements are given and food is shared.

If you want to get a window into a child’s world then you need to sit around the kitchen table with him or her.

When I was a kid mum always made sure there’d be some food on the table when I came home from school. As soon as I came through the back door I’d throw my school bag in my room and come and sit down at the kitchen table to eat.

Mum used to sit at the kitchen table and have a cuppa at the same time. She always did..... or it’s seems like she did. My most vivid memories are sitting around the kitchen table with her.

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People attach emotions to locations.

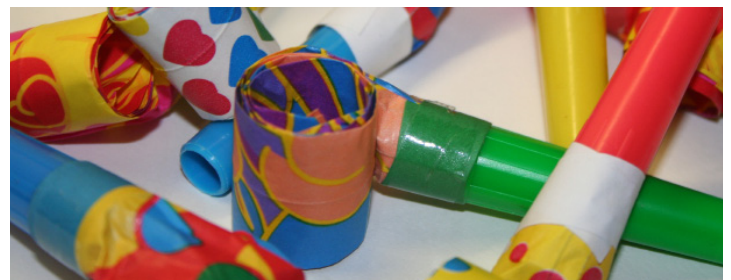
People attach feelings to different places. I’d like to think my family links happy, joyous feelings to our kitchen table. After all we’ve had plenty of birthdays, Christmases, fantastic dinners, big breakfasts and countless other gatherings around our kitchen table.

The kitchen table anchors my now adult kids back to their childhoods and gives them a sense of belonging. That’s why the kitchen table is the first place they go to when they come home for a visit. They feel at home again.

On my trips to England I’ve noticed that the English don’t use the kitchen table like Aussies do. In fact, about a third of English homes don’t have a kitchen table at all. Many families eat in shifts and in front of the television.

English educators are concerned. They want their parents to talk to their kids more. They know when parents talk with their kids they enrich their vocabularies, and better still, influence their thinking.

They know that the kitchen table is a powerful ally in creating talk between the generations. That’s why they are encouraging people to sit at the kitchen table more.



The power of the kitchen table is immense. Don’t underestimate it or underuse it!

You can build kids’ confidence around it. You can build their character around it. You can build resilience too. Better still, you can build a family around the kitchen table and that’s quite a feat.

Making mealtimes memorable

1. **Turn your evening meal into a night out at home.** Once a week dust off the best knives and forks and set the table in style complete with serviettes and candlesticks. Try waiting on your family restaurant style and impress on kids that they can use their best manners.
2. **Serve from the table.** Turn a simple meal into a communal activity by putting serving plates on the table, and plating up from the kitchen table. Kids usually stay longer when food is served this way.
3. **Any excuse for a celebration.** Look for reasons to celebrate with a sit down meal where everyone is expected to join in. Birthdays, term break-up days or a great school report are worth recognizing in this way.

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