
Supporting Healthy Habits in Children Who Have Experienced Food Insecurity

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, “Hoarding, Stealing, & Bingeing: Food Insecurity in Foster Children” from Fostering People. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Identify the ways that children who have experienced trauma may present with challenges around food and healthy habits.
- ◆ Identify the children in your care who may need support in developing healthy habits and overcoming behaviors around food insecurity.
- ◆ Develop an action plan to promote healthy habits within the children in your care who may have experienced trauma.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ After reading, use the questions below to guide your discussion and action plan to support children’s development of healthy habits.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support healthy habits.

“Trauma can make it difficult for young people to ‘listen to their bodies’, due to constantly being in flight or fight stress response mode.”

Fostering People

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ This article highlights the ways that children may develop habits around food when they experience food insecurity.
 - Reflect on a moment in your life when you may have needed to prepare for a natural disaster (i.e., hurricane, tropical storm, etc.). How did you prepare? Was food a main concern in your planning and preparation? What emotions did you feel during this prep? What concerns did you have about food during this insecure moment?
 - Consider the children in your classroom who may experience trauma through food insecurity. What emotions might they have around food? How might this play a role in their development of healthy habits?

- ◆ The article provides tips for identifying children who may engage in food stealing, bingeing, and hoarding behaviors. Observe the children in your care who may have experienced trauma around food insecurity.
 - What signs do you notice in the classroom?
 - What has the family reported to you about the child's habits around food? Consider ways you may partner with the family to overcome food insecurity and support the child's healthy habits.

- ◆ The article highlights that, "Food is often used by foster children as a way to gain some control over their lives that have often been turbulent and unstable." Consider the ways that stealing, bingeing, and/or hoarding food may provide some control for children who have experienced trauma.
 - Review the support suggestions provided in the article. Which of these are you already implementing in your learning environment? Which of these suggestions may be beneficial for the children in your care?
 - Create an action plan to help children develop secure relationships with food and improve their healthy habits. How can you offer the children in your care a sense of control while also supporting their healthy habits?
 - Carefully monitor children's progress and modify your support as needed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about healthy habits:

- ◆ **Source:** The Therapeutic Parent Podcast
 - ◆ **Podcast:** How Trauma Impacts Children and Food
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-trauma-impacts-children-and-food/id1543689505?i=1000530106266>
 - ◆ **Description:** This podcast discusses how trauma can impact children's relationships with food and their development of healthy habits. It provides some preventative strategies and strategies to use in-the-moment to support children.
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- ◆ **Source:** Baylor College of Medicine
 - ◆ **Article:** Gardening with kids: promoting healthy eating and responsibility
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://blogs.bcm.edu/2022/08/23/gardening-with-kids-promoting-healthy-eating-and-responsibility/>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article describes the benefits of gardening in building children's healthy habits around food.