

HOW DO WE PROMOTE POSITIVE MEALTIME BEHAVIOURS?



Lindy Thomas

Psychologist

lindythomas@enablepsychology.co.nz





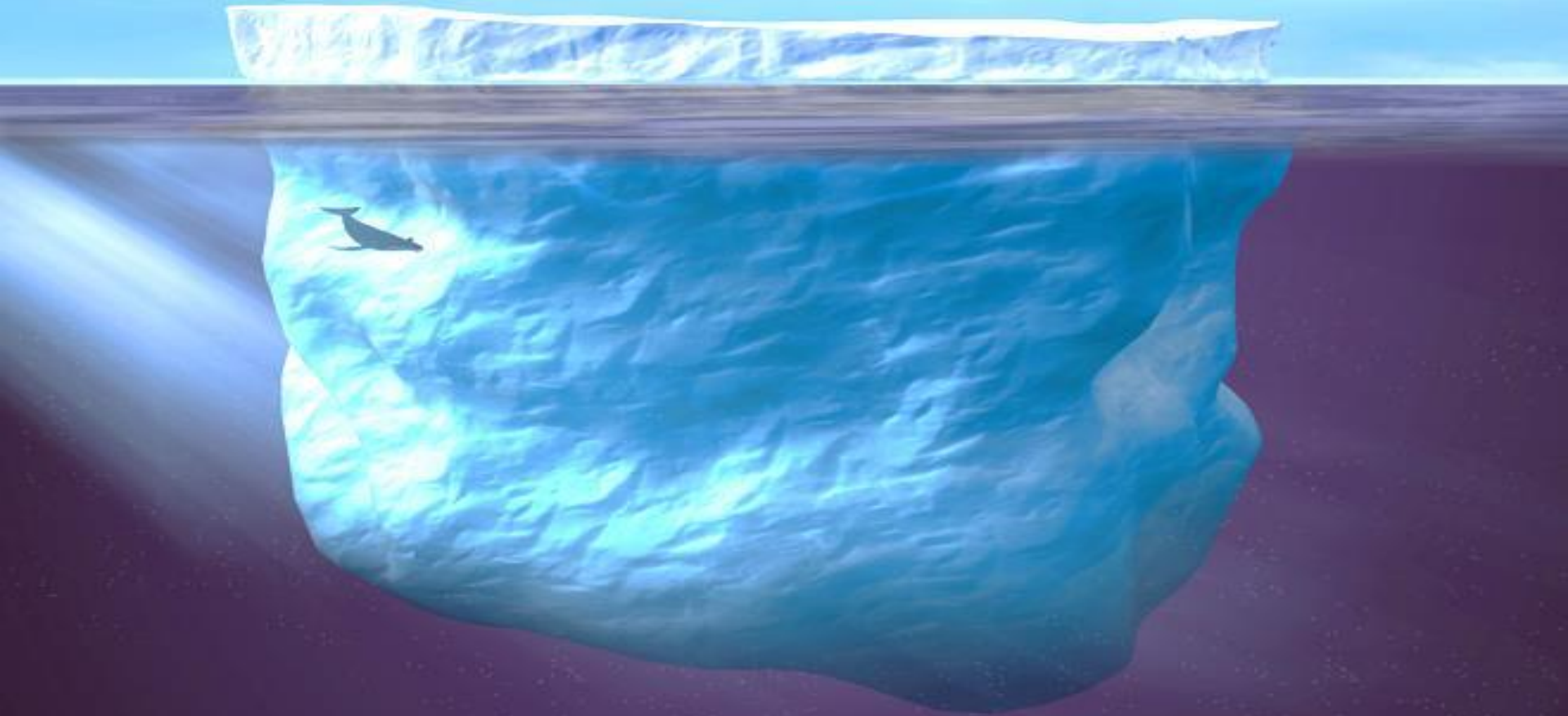


What we will look at today

1. The complex nature of mealtimes - factors influencing mealtime behaviours
2. What has the greatest positive impact - what research tells us (behavioural interventions and altering the broader environment as well as the mealtime environment)
3. Practical implications - what we can do to promote positive mealtime behaviours?
 - Role responsibility - Who's in the driving seat?
 - Exposure beyond the table – there's more to food than just eating it
 - Social context – Modelling and family meals
 - Physical environment - It's not just about sitting at the table
 - Structure/routines

The complex nature of mealtimes

Mealtime Behaviours



The complex nature of mealtimes

Mealtime Behaviours

Child Factors

- Physical health
- Previous feeding experiences
- Temperament
- Developmental stage

The complex nature of mealtimes

Mealtime Behaviours

Child Factors

Physical health
Previous feeding experiences
Temperament
Developmental stage

Parent Factors

History with food
Physical & Mental Health
Cognitive Beliefs
Stress levels
Parenting Style

The complex nature of mealtimes

Mealtime Behaviours

Child Factors

Physical health
Previous feeding experiences
Temperament
Developmental stage

Parent Factors

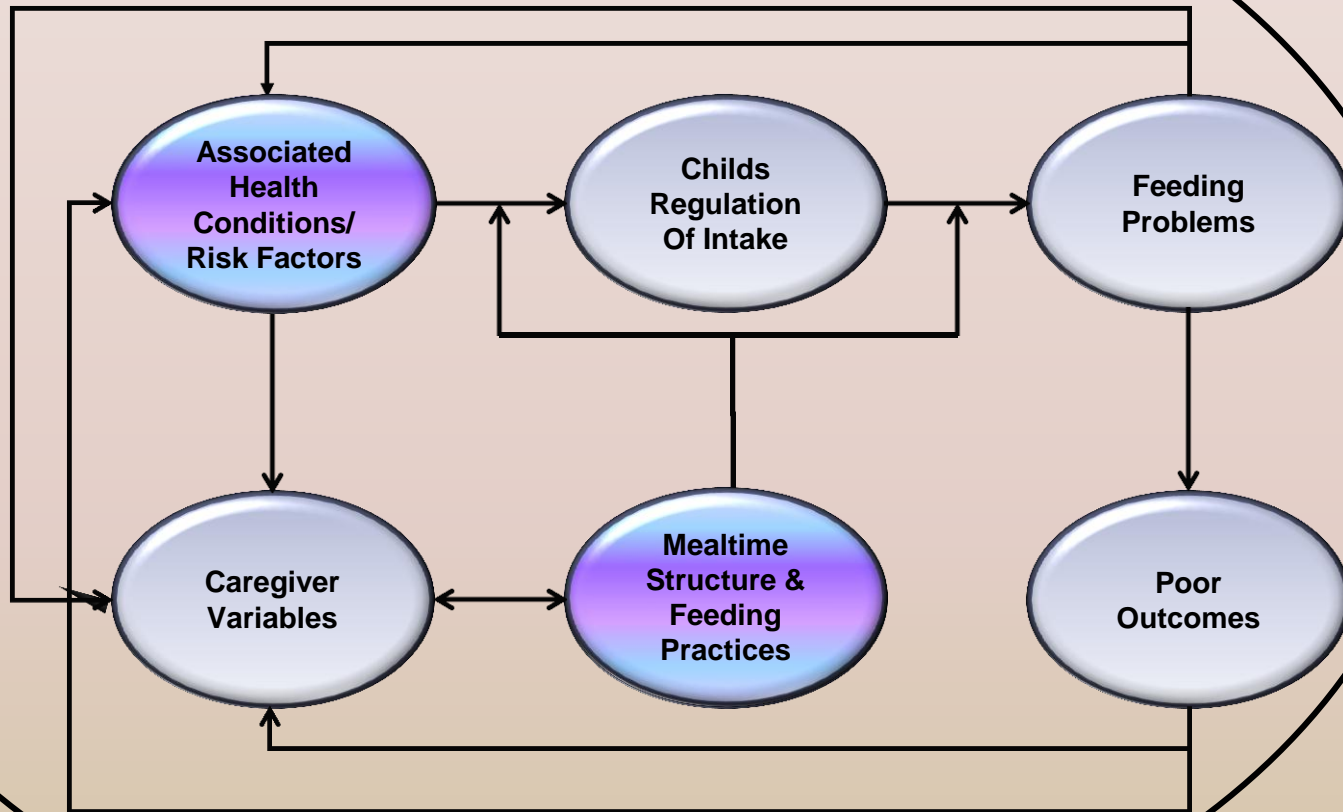
History with food
Physical & Mental Health
Cognitive Beliefs
Stress levels
Parenting Style

Environmental

Physical (Table, seating; utensils; distractions)
Social (Cultural; modelling; emotional climate of family meals; routines)

What has the greatest impact?

Interplay of Factors



Practical implications...

Role responsibility - Who's in the driving seat?

- Parent decides what, when and where a child eats
- Child decides on how much they will eat
- Rationale
 - Child is dependent on the parent for the food
 - Child responds to their satiety
 - Balance of responsibilities allows families to enjoy meals



Practical implications...

Exposure beyond the table - There's more to food than just eating...

- Food art
- Feeding pets
- Veggie gardens
- Messy food play
- Active involvement in shopping
- Food preparation

Practical implications...

The Social context - Modelling

- Learn through social referencing
- Parents provide cues on what a child considers to be normal eating behaviours
- Mothers intake and variety of vegetables strongest predictor of child's vegetable intake (Galloway et al 2003)



Practical implications...

The Social context - Family meals

- Positively associated with a number of outcomes, such as school achievement, and mental health

(Eisenberg Me, 2004).

- Results in improved nutritional intakes
 - with higher fruit and vegetable consumption
 - better overall diet quality



Practical implications...

Family meals - what do they entail?

- Sitting with the child
- Eating the same food
- Allowing the child to serve her- or himself
- Offering a variety
- Relaxing and avoiding to hurry the child
- Allowing the child to decide how much food will be eaten
- Talking pleasantly to the child at meals – not just about food
- Avoiding distractions – television, iPads etc.

Practical implications...

The physical environment – it's not just sitting at a table



Practical implications...

Structure and Routines

Example of a good routine:

1. Verbal warning, time to wash hands – sensory prep
2. Same place, same seating arrangements
3. Flannel available
4. Cues to eating
5. Closed choices
6. Timer – signals clear start and end
7. Positive comments
8. Drinks at the end
9. Clean-up
10. Follow with a favourable activity

Summary Tips for Promoting Positive Mealtime Behaviours

- Parents decide what, when and where a child eats and the child decides whether to eat and how much
- Encourage child to explore with foods - Actively engage your child in growing vegetables shopping and cooking
- Establish a good mealtime routine
- Offer closed choices
- Don't let children fill up on drinks
- Be a good role model
- Serve the same foods to all the family
- Create a positive environment around family meals



Thank you

Questions?