

Guest Column for the Missoulian, December 2021

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When you see a guest column from *5210 Let's Move! Missoula*, you may expect exercise tips and recipes for low-fat holiday snacks. Not this time.

An article published on October 25 in the *Missoulian* said it best: "Kids with Obesity Need Acceptance from Family, Friends, Not Just Better Diet Tips, to Succeed at Managing Weight." The article highlighted a 2021 study published by researchers at the University of Oklahoma.

The upshot of the study? The ONLY group of kids with obesity who reduced their body mass index was the group where families participated in a three-pronged approach. First, kids and their families learned about healthy eating, physical activity AND how to avoid arguing about food (how much healthy food a child must eat before he or she can get dessert, for example). Second, families learned parenting skills. Specifically, kids and their caregivers learned about healthy management of emotions. The idea was that teaching kids how to manage their emotions may help them avoid a tendency to eat when they are stressed or upset. Kids learned how to manage negative emotions, express their feelings and to appreciate their own uniqueness. Parents learned how to value their kids' emotions, provide understanding and comfort, support their kids' problem-solving and accept their children as they are. The third and final component was school based. It involved teaching *students* to accept their peers and classmates just as they are.

So you won't find any recipes here today. What we would like to suggest is that in the spirit of the holidays, our community works to accept each other the way we are. People of all sizes can be healthy. And we can value people with all kinds of differences.

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