

## Melinda and Terry's Story – My Job, His Job

"You always put too many vegetables in my food!"

One delightful evening when my husband and I had dinner plans, I made our two teenagers a frittata for dinner with goat cheese and, I admit it, too much spinach. One devours everything I cook and the other typically eats it all after tormenting me with complaints about the healthy ingredients. I have always prepared my family's dinner, even when I was working full time, but there have been significant shifts since I started Suppers.

My boys were already adolescents when I started the program, so change introduced extra tension into the household. I had to follow the recommendations of nutritional harm reduction and introduce new rules slowly. I had to pick my battles. I also had to remember that I was the parent and he was the child, my son, not my friend.

At Suppers we had a presentation that really clarified the division of labor when it comes to eating. My job was to make sure only healthy food came into the house. "You never buy cookies any more."

"True, they're never here."

My job was to keep a pitcher of filtered water in the frig. "Why can't we have soda anymore?"

"Because I said so."

My job was to be sure healthy food was available when they were hungry, which for me meant having a bowl of nuts, mashed avocados, humus, and cut up vegetables and fruits on the table an hour before dinner. "You are so manipulative."

"It's called parenting."

My job was also to stay out of their eating once there was only healthy food in the house. It was their job to decide how much to eat and of which foods. "I'm only eating the chicken and salad. I hate asparagus."

"That's fine. Would you like to munch on some sugar snap peas?" A favorite vegetable of his.

And it was all of our jobs to spend time together at the family table.

So far, good food hasn't altered our basic personalities. We still have scraps over the details. I do see gradual success with the choices my son is making and grudging acceptance of change. After all, he did eat half of that too-much-spinach frittata. Even though there was lots of spinach, it is hard to resist the flavor of goat cheese!

My son taught me a thing or two also, like about honoring boundaries. "Stop putting kale in my blueberry smoothie."

"OK, son, I'll never do it again."

This morning I added half an avocado to the morning smoothie and everyone thought it tasted great!