FEEDING TIME IN THE WILD – AND AT HOME!

Best for ages 4–8

This activity gets kids to think about the food web and their place in it. Kids learn new vocabulary—carnivore, herbivore, or omnivore—to describe an animal by what it prefers to eat, and then match up food items in the house with the animals that might eat those things. Then kids consider where they (humans) fit into this picture.

What you need:
- A bunch of stuffed animals (preferably non-fictional animals, but imaginary ones like unicorns and dragons can also work). Pictures of animals—photos or drawings—are also fine, if stuffed animals aren’t available.
- A bunch of food items you don’t mind playing with gently that can be sorted into meat, vegetables (or fruit), or a combination. Play food is ideal, if you have it. You could also draw a variety of food to use.

Steps:
1. Ask kids to sort the stuffed animals into those that eat only meat, those that eat only vegetation, and those that eat both.
2. Now sort your food into meat items, vegetable/fruit items, and combination items.
3. Have the kids “feed” the animals, and talk with the kids about whether the animals would like that food. If they try to feed a rabbit hot dogs, for example, you could say, “Woah, that bunny would say ‘yuck’ to that! What can we give her that she would really like?” Practice using the words carnivore (meat eater), herbivore (plant eater), and omnivore (meat and plant eater) with the kids.
4. Now have kids consider themselves: humans. Are we carnivores, herbivores, or omnivores? Why do they think that?
5. You can now have the kids put together a meal they would like, and then one someone else in your household likes.

What have we learned?
- Animals eat different things.
- There are specific words for these ways to categorize animals (carnivore, herbivore, and omnivore).
- Animals all depend on other living things to survive.
- We are animals, too, with our own food preferences!