Talking about Healthy Habits

Providing nutritious meals and snacks is an important function of your program. It is also important for staff members to model a healthy approach to fitness. However, sometimes it is not so easy. Read these scenarios and decide how you would respond.

 "He just never eats anything. Honestly, I don't know how he stays alive," Jody exclaims as you watch Paul dump a full plate of food into the garbage. "He is so skinny, and his mom has asked me to write her a note everyday about how much he eats. I just can't get him to take a single bite of anything other than peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. He's got to eat something. What should I do?"

2. As you walk into the front office, you overhear raised voices drifting from the manager's office. You notice Lillian, an active duty Marine and the parent of a school-age child. She is holding a pamphlet from your program's new nutrition initiative. "I think it's great you're doing this, but I think it's pretty hypocritical, Dawn. I mean, I don't want to be insensitive, but the leader of the pre-teen program is definitely overweight. I'm concerned that she can't move fast enough to keep our kids safe in an emergency. I also don't think she's the kind of role model our kids need to be seeing. You know, many of your military parents have to meet regular weigh-ins to keep mission ready ... what is your staff doing?" Dawn, the manager, sees you and pulls you into the room. What do you do and say?

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3. You know that Annette, a staff member in your school-age program, is recovering from anorexia and bulimia. She has never said anything about her exercise habits, but you know that she works out every morning, every evening, and for several hours at midday. You overheard some of the girls talking about her muscles and how much they want to look like her. You overheard them discussing the calories in the snack they were eating and how they needed to lose weight. You are concerned that the girls might adopt unhealthy habits. What would you do?

4. Sandra, a staff member in your preschool program, constantly jokes about being "allergic to exercise." When kids ask her to play outdoor games, she always has a witty comment and a reason to sit on the bench with other children. How would you address this issue with Sandra?