## **Questions and Answers**

## What to Do About Milk?

Carl Ferré

## Hı,

A mother told me about her little daughter who had just been to a kindergarten. There they teach kids some mistaken concepts, such an example is telling them that milk is good and essential for teeth and health. As a parent what would you do about it? Or, what do you suggest parents should do in such a situation? Your feedback is highly appreciated. Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

- Abdullah Sabooni

hese are excellent questions and in order to answer some background information is needed. When an adult begins a macrobiotic practice, they learn individual responsibility, by which each person takes responsibility for their own health. At first, one might follow dietary suggestions from a book or from a macrobiotic counselor or friend, but sooner or later one learns to make their own food choices depending on their unique constitution, condition, and purpose.

When a child begins a macrobiotic practice, especially those kindergarten age or younger, it is usually because the parents have decided it is best for the child. In this case, the parents have the additional responsibility for the child's choices and health. In my opinion, it is also the parent's responsibility to be open and honest with the child or children. So, in answer to your first question here is the first thing I would do.

The very first thing I would do is to talk with the child to explain the difference between a typical diet and a macrobiotic one. This needs to be done in simple terms of course, but at the very least communicate that your family is different from other families and that some foods that others feel are good and essential for them are not so good in your opinion. Be prepared to answer their next question, which mostly likely will be, "Why?" The more clear you can be about your decision to practice macrobiotics the better.

There are many reasons for macrobiotic practice and you will need to answer that question in your own way. At some point you could explain that what one chooses to eat

determines what is "good and essential" for that person. In other words, milk, assuming it doesn't have "vitamin D" added, may be good and essential for those eating a typical meat-and-sugar diet. So, what they are teaching is not wrong for such persons.

The question now becomes, "How can a food that is good and essential for some people be harmful to others?" Of course, a complete answer is probably beyond the kindergartener's comprehension, but the simple answer is that each person is unique and has her or his own dietary needs. Thus, you can't say that any food, including milk, is bad for everyone all the time. In like manner, you can't say that any food, including brown rice, is good for everyone all the time

The second thing I would do is to consider whether or not to confront the kindergarten or school regarding the teaching. Of course if the school starts requiring that every student drink milk, then some action would be required on your part unless you want to comply. We have homeschooled our kids for the most part and have limited experience. Like, everything else I would assume a large variation among schools in the amount of openness to parental involvement.

As to your second question, I believe parents should follow their own hearts and thinking. My only suggestion is that if you decide to confront the school officials, that you learn how to do so in a non-combative way. You can go in with all the macrobiotic arguments about milk that you can find in the literature. They will counter with science and medical studies. If, on the other hand, you go in respecting their training and thinking, then you have a chance that they will respect your thoughts and opinions. In other words, present your view as an alternative rather than telling them that their teaching is faulty or wrong.

I hope this helps in some way. Good luck to you and to the mother and daughter.

Carl Ferré is author of Pocket Guide to Macrobiotics and editor of Macrobiotics Today.