

The Family Meal Model

Understanding the meal tensions

Please Note: Materials and ideas contained in this report remain the intellectual property of the BC Dairy Foundation and Concerto Marketing Group Inc. and may not be reproduced, republished, distributed, displayed, broadcast or otherwise exploited in any manner without express prior permission. The morphological psychology needs and motivations model is the intellectual property of Concerto Marketing's strategic partner, IFM In-depth Research and Strategies Pty Ltd., used under license. The Better Together trademark is the property of BC Dairy Foundation.



Understanding the meal tensions

Our Better Together research uncovered three psychological tensions driving family meal behaviour.

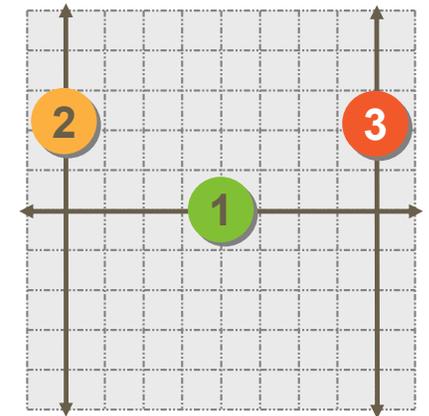
What is a psychological tension?

- Psychological tensions are underlying drivers of human behaviour; in this case, behaviour associated with meals.
- These three tensions have been defined through an extensive process of Morphological Research and analysis; exploring each participant response individually and collectively.
- The tensions are a unique variation of the three fundamental tensions that form the basis of Morphological Psychology and Morphological Research.

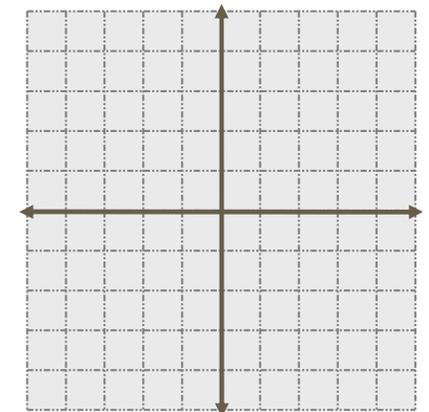
What is the value of uncovering these tensions?

- The tensions allow us to understand the underlying, often unconscious, motivations behind everyday human behaviour.
- By understanding how these tensions work for a product, service, behaviour or brand, we are able to create a model of motivation.

Psychological tensions



Psychological model



Meals - Primary Tension

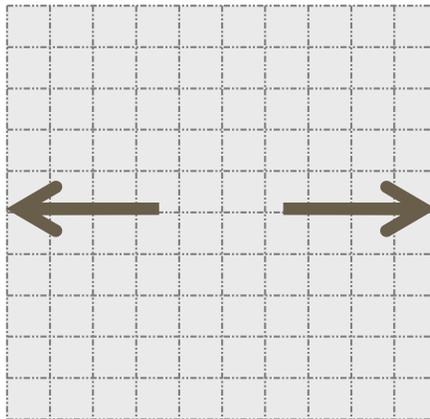
The routine of meals (*nutrition & bonding; together as one unit*)

- In our first experience of a meal, food and love, nutrition and bonding are inseparable as one process, one routine.
- Family meals act as the focus around which all life and family routines occur, with specific time allocated and observed by the family unit.
- Meals are treated as an opportunity for 'team building' with rules and trust; conflict and safety.
- The act of making and eating a meal is given special significance. When food is scarce it is treasured by families, often being considered a gift of love (like making soup for someone).
- **Meal qualities: Bonding, warmth.**

The fragmentation of life (*units of individuals with individual demands*)

- Conversely, the reality of everyday life can act to fragment family, creating units of individuals each with individual demands.
- Family meals become subservient to life and its demands – we become full with filled schedules.
- Activities (TV, internet, sports) are allocated specific times and respected as essential, often occurring while the meal is eaten.
- Food is abundant, but time is treated as a scarce resource. Time-starved the need for fast-food emerges, and the process of out-sourcing meal preparation to other people or brands.
- **Meal qualities: Fast, individual.**

The Tension



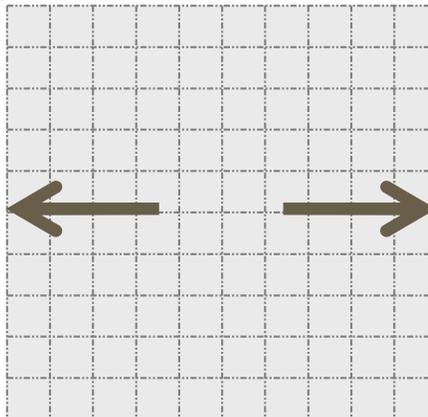
Meals - Primary Tension

Primary Tension Example

Fragmentation: “The reason why we keep my nephew on weekends is because he wasn’t being looked after properly by his parents. His options with them were quite limited. They’re not big on family meals.” - Mother

Routine: “When he came to us we knew there were only certain things we can change in his life...Eating at the table is a good way to show him family, it’s about modelling good behaviour and modelling respect. We talk at the table. It’s about preparing him for real life.” - Mother

The Tension



Meals - Secondary Tension

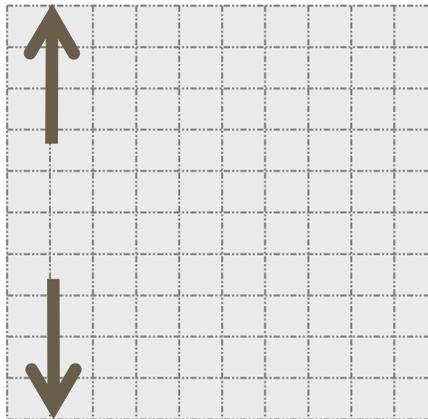
Traditions ▼

- At the core of meals lie the traditions of family, culture and religion, a way to systematically pass on meal routines to the next generation.
- These traditions play a key role in maintaining meals as a bonding and valued part of life.
- Meals are imbued with symbolic rituals like Sabbath candles, prayer, glass-salutes or special table settings, which create a sense of cohesion and structure.
- Meals also become a means to remember memories and cooking of loved ones past (and times spent together with them).
- ***Meal qualities: Long, symbolic.***

▲ Re-creation

- However, traditions and routines only remain alive if they're re-created by the next generation; allowing new individuals to make their mark on the meal, like fingers in dough.
- Meals must also provide recreation for all involved. This pleasure becomes a reason to continue repeating and eating meals.
- The process empowers participants to take, and taste, responsibility for their actions.
- Re-creation often involves fun meal activities like baking with grandparents, or learning to BBQ simple meat dishes.
- ***Meal qualities: Fun, relaxed.***

The Tension



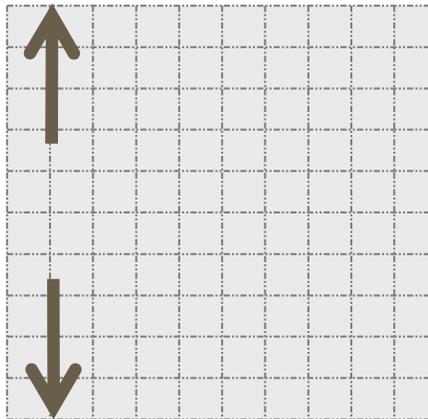
Meals - Secondary Tension

Secondary Tension Example

Traditions: “We just went through Thanksgiving with my mother-in-law and we needed different stuffing to make everybody feel like they were at home. My mother-in-law was the boss, she was in charge.” - Mother

Re-creation: “She learnt it from her mother, so she can teach me...I’m listening, watching and trying what she’s doing. If something were to happen to her, my husband would never have it again if I didn’t learn. I’d like to pass this stuff down to my boys. It’s their heritage.” - Mother

The Tension



Meals - Tertiary Tension

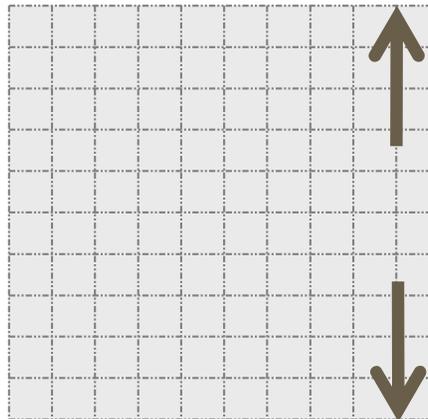
Limitations & demands ▼

- The realities of modern life impose heavily on meals, and place limitations on family eating.
- Ideals are always being balanced by the limitations of time and skill, in addition to the evolving demands of family and society.
- For many younger generations there are skill gaps; not knowing how to 're-create' meals.
- Healthy food creates tension, taking longer to prepare but often resulting in family hostility.
- Individual demands can result in family members eating their meal alone (fragmenting) or placing intense pressure on the cook.
- **Meal qualities: Functional, fast.**

▲ Perfection & harmony

- The ideal for families is to achieve perfect harmony with their family meals.
- However, this ideal is very hard to achieve amongst a 'unit' of individuals and often becomes an impossible benchmark for families.
- Attempting to maintain harmony can lead families to substitute emotional perfection with visual perfection in meals, or cater *à la carte* to every individual's culinary demands.
- The ideal of perfection can become a mirage; the more you chase it, the further away it gets (like Icarus and the sun).
- **Meal qualities: Perfect, harmonious.**

The Tension



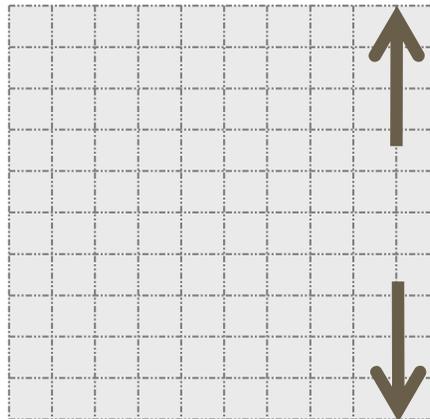
Meals - Tertiary Tension

Tertiary Tension Example

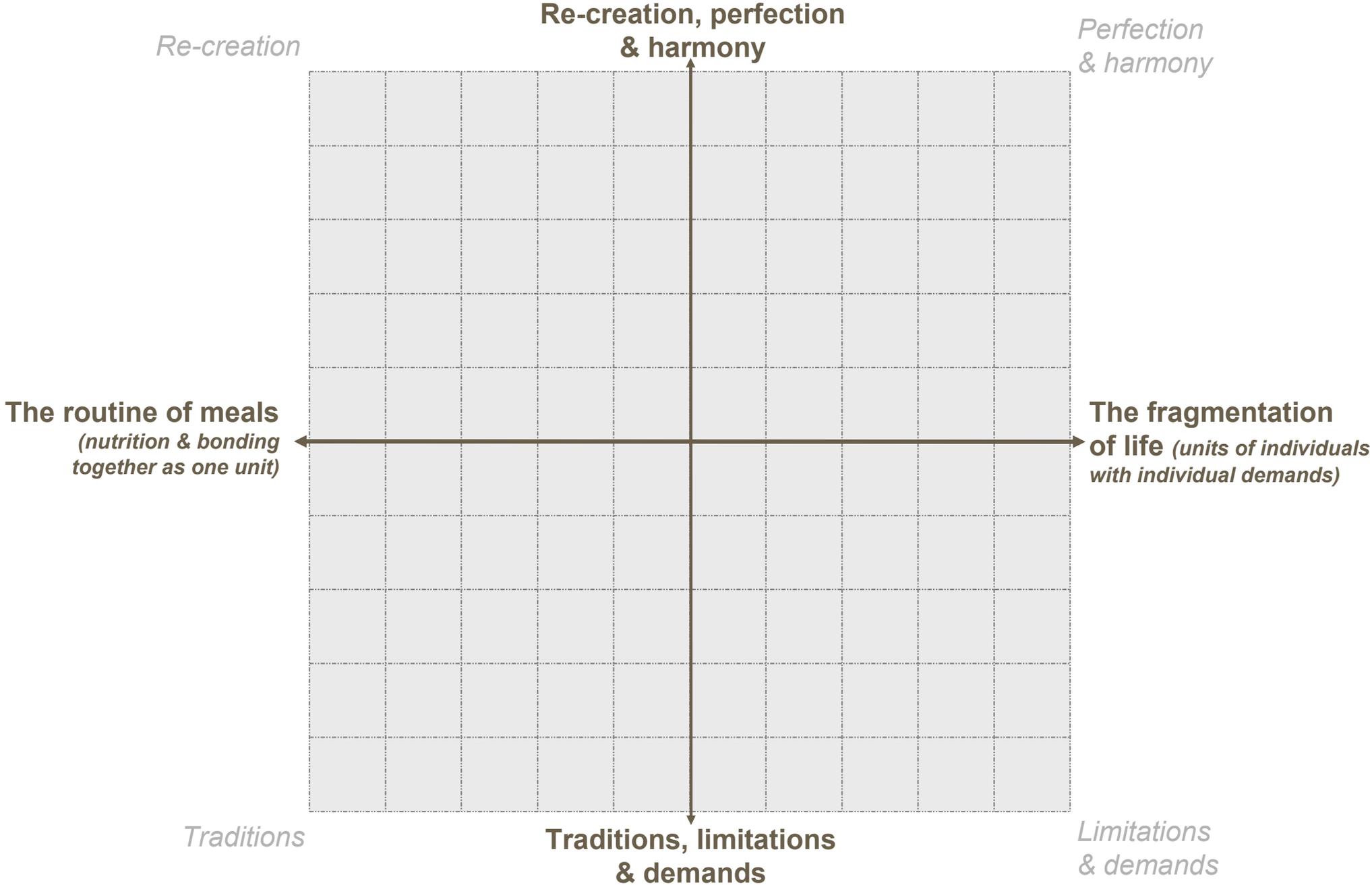
Perfection & harmony: “I want my son to eat all the things he needs in an easy way that he really enjoys. Once I start trying to put together things at home, he complains. It really is easier just not dealing with it.” - Mother

Limitations & demands: “My son is a very picky eater; if it’s something new he complains. Being a mum and dealing with all his emotional issues, I don’t want to deal with meal issues. I’d just rather cut up snacks, have him munch them, and play computer games.” - Mother

The Tension



Psychological model for meals





The Family Meal Model

Understanding the meal tensions

Please Note: Materials and ideas contained in this report remain the intellectual property of the BC Dairy Foundation and Concerto Marketing Group Inc. and may not be reproduced, republished, distributed, displayed, broadcast or otherwise exploited in any manner without express prior permission. The morphological psychology needs and motivations model is the intellectual property of Concerto Marketing's strategic partner, IFM In-depth Research and Strategies Pty Ltd., used under license. The Better Together trademark is the property of BC Dairy Foundation.

