

# Feeding Children

Mealtime can be frustrating for parents and their children. However, when parents and children know their roles, meals can become more enjoyable, and children learn how to grow into healthy adults.

## What do we want for our children?

- To eat the right amount of food for their bodies
- To have a better relationship with food
- To eat a variety of foods during meals and snacks
- To grow into healthy adults



## You can help by knowing your role.

Follow Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding (sDOR)

### Parent's Role

#### When eating is allowed:

- Offer structured meals on a regular schedule
- Offer structured snacks on a regular schedule

#### Where eating is allowed:

- Eat together in the same space, facing each other
- Remove distractions
- Create a pleasant mood and conversation

#### What is provided:

- Worry less about what/how much "should" be eaten
- Provide traditional foods your family enjoys
- Be considerate of likes and dislikes without catering

### Child's Role

#### How Much to eat:

- Children choose how much to eat from the food offered at meals and snacks
- Children may have second helpings, without being required to eat their vegetables or clean their plate

#### Whether to eat at all:

- Children can choose to eat as much or as little from what is offered
- If children choose not to eat what has been prepared, parents avoid offering a substitute
- Children can sit at the table for an appropriate amount of time, even without eating
- If children choose not to eat, parents will stick to meal/snack schedule

## What does Brenner FIT know about feeding children?

### When parents **RESTRICT**...

If parents limit the amount of food their children can eat...

If parents NEVER allow child to eat their favorite foods...

### When parents **PRESSURE**...

If parents push their children to eat more ("clean your plate" or "finish your vegetables")...

If parents encourage or coax their children to eat a food...

### When parents **USE FOOD AS A REWARD**...

If parents reward with food (i.e. "Eat your vegetables and you can have a piece of candy")...

If parents punish children by using food (i.e. "Eat your vegetables, or you can't watch TV")...

### When parents **WORRY ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S WEIGHT**...

If parents focus on the amount their children eat...

If parents pressure children to eat less...

### ... children tend to **EAT MORE**.

...then children are hungrier and ask for more food.

...then children eat more of the "forbidden" foods when available.

### ... children tend to **EAT LESS**.

...then children put up even more of a fight.

...then children pay less attention to signals of hunger/fullness and like foods even less than before.

### ... children tend to **ADJUST THEIR PREFERENCES**.

...then children learn to like candy and desserts even more.

...then children learn to like vegetables even less.

### ... children tend to **FEEL PRESSURE**.

...then children focus on what parents think about their eating.

...then children feel pressure to eat less.

## What should parents expect when beginning to use sDOR?

1. It takes time to make changes. Parents should be patient and keep practicing.
2. At first, children may eat more than usual. Once parents are no longer the food police and TRUST their children to do their role, parents will begin seeing changes with their eating.
3. Mealtimes will be more enjoyable for everyone and family relationships around food will improve.
4. Parents will know that sDOR is working when their children:
  - Start to leave food on their plate
  - Try new foods on their own
  - Do not hide or sneak food
  - Do not beg for food as much
  - Follow the meal/snack schedule on their own

# Responding to Children in the sDOR Way

Knowing what to say to your child when practicing Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding can be tricky at times. Here is some help.

## Children may say ...

## Parent could say...

|  |  |
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| "This is nasty. I don't like it."  | "You get to choose whether you want to eat it."  |
| "Can I have some more to eat? I am still hungry."                            | "Yes, you may serve yourself."   |
| "I am not hungry for dinner."  | "We all sit at the table at dinner time. You can choose whether you want to eat or just be with us."                           |
| "I am hungry right now!"   | "Our next time to eat is snack time at 3:00."  |
| "I am hungry. I can't wait for dinner. Can I have a snack right now?"        | "Dinner will be ready in 30 minutes. What would you like to do to help get dinner ready -- cut up the salad or set the table?" |
| "I don't want this. I want macaroni and cheese instead."                     | "This is what our family is eating tonight. We will be having macaroni and cheese on Tuesday."                                 |
| "Why can't I make a sandwich for dinner? I don't like what is for dinner."   | "Having a family meal together means sharing the same food. You don't have to eat anything if you don't want."                 |
| "Why do I have to be home in time for dinner? I can just warm up leftovers." | "Eating together is important for our family. You are an important part of our family."  |

## Parents may say...

## Instead, try saying this...

|  |  |
|--|--|
| "I've told you a thousand times. Go wash your hands."  | "What do you need to do to get ready to eat?"  |
| "Eat your vegetables. They are good for you."  | Offer vegetables without commenting.   |
| "You have to clean your plate before you leave the table."                                   | "You may leave the table when you have had enough to eat."   |
| "You must take 2 more bites of your vegetable before you can have more mashed potatoes."     | Avoid making rules about what children have to eat at dinner. Offer meal without focusing on what your child eats or does not eat. |
| "Do you want some more? Are you sure you ate enough? Would you like just a little bit more?" | Offer meal without pressure to eat. Let your child decide how much or whether to eat.  |
| "You cannot possibly be hungry. You ate more than I did!"                                    | Offer meal without pressure to eat a certain amount. Let child decide how much to eat.   |
| "Should you really be eating that?"  | Parents provide and children decide. Do your job of the when, where and what of feeding. Let your child do his job of eating.      |
| "You can't have dessert until you finish your vegetables."                                   | Offer dessert to everyone regardless of how much or little is eaten.   |