

Helping Children Develop Positive Eating Habits

Tips for Parents

- Offer a variety of nutritious food at regular intervals – planned meals & snacks.
- Help the child identify hunger and fullness.
- Be a good example of normal, healthy eating and lifestyle.
- Follow Ellyn Satter’s “Golden Rule for Parenting with Food”
 - Parents are responsible for what is presented to eat and the manner in which it is presented.
 - Children are responsible for how much and even whether they eat.

Which will you do?	
<i>Instead of...</i>	<i>Try this...</i>
Using food as a reward or bribe.	Give hugs and kisses instead of food.
Letting your child drink from a bottle.	Have your child use a cup.
Letting your child eat <u>whenever</u> he wants.	Set regular meal and snack times.
Letting your child eat <u>whatever</u> she wants.	Offer a choice of healthy foods.
Quieting your child with food.	Comfort your child with attention and affection.
Setting stricter limits for large child than rest of family.	Use the same limits and foods for all members of family.
Letting your child help himself/herself to food.	Store food out of sight and out of reach.
Letting your child watch TV or play with toys during mealtime.	Take away distractions during mealtime.
Telling your child to “clean his plate.”	Encourage your child to stop when he’s full.
Forbidding your child to eat “junk foods.”	Allow your child to enjoy all foods in moderation.

Source: Satter, Ellyn. *How to Get Your Kid to Eat, but Not Too Much*. 1987

Are you contributing to someone's eating disorder?

The culture of disordered eating and body hatred is pervasive in our society. The following are ways in which we might unintentionally encourage eating disorders in our friends and family.

- Praising or glorifying another's appearance based on body size, shape, or weight.
- Complimenting someone when they lose weight or diet.
- Encouraging (or requiring) someone to lose weight or try a new diet.
- Talking negatively about our bodies.
- Discussing weight, clothing sizes, or measurements.
- Saying someone is healthy or fit because he/she is thin or muscular.
- Assuming that a large person needs to lose weight.
- Referring to foods as "good" or "bad." And, referring to ourselves as "good" or "bad" because we ate (or didn't eat) them.
- Making fun of another person's eating habits or food choices.
- Praising someone who exercises compulsively every day (despite injury, illness, or neglect in other areas of life).
- Encouraging exercise as a way to purge fat from our bodies or compensate for calories eaten.
- Reinforcing the idea that larger or fatter is "bad" and smaller or thinner is "good."

10 Things Parents Can Do to Prevent Eating Disorders

1. Consider your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors toward your own body and the way that these beliefs have been shaped by the forces of weightism and sexism.
2. Educate children about the genetic basis for the diversity of human body shapes and sizes.
3. Help children appreciate and resist the ways in which television, magazines, and other media distort the true diversity of human body types and imply that a slender or muscular body means power, excitement, popularity, happiness, or perfection.
4. Educate children about various forms of prejudice, including weightism; and help them understand their responsibilities for preventing them.
5. Be a good role model in regard to sensible eating, moderate physical activity, self-acceptance, and positive "body talk." Children learn from the things you say and do!
6. Learn about and discuss the dangers of trying to alter one's body shape through dieting, the value of moderate exercise for health and well-being, and the importance of eating a variety of foods in well-balanced meals and snacks throughout the day.
7. De-emphasize weight and body composition. Focus on true indicators of fitness and health, like strength, endurance, speed, flexibility, balance, optimal blood pressure, and optimal blood lipid levels.
8. Use words like "fit, strong, and healthy" to describe our ideal body vs. "thin, ripped, shredded, and/or skinny."
9. Practice taking people seriously for what they say, feel, and do—not for how slender, muscular, or "well put together" they appear.
10. Do whatever you can to promote the self-esteem and self-respect of all of your children in intellectual, athletic, and social endeavors. Give boys and girls the same opportunities and encouragement. A well-rounded sense of self and solid self esteem are perhaps the best antidotes to dieting and disordered eating.