ELLYN SATTER’S DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN FEEDING

Children are born wanting to eat, knowing how much to eat and inclined to grow in the way that nature intended. Good parenting with feeding preserves those qualities throughout the growing-up years. Parents provide structure, support and opportunities. Children choose how much and whether to eat from what the parents provide.

The Division of Responsibility for Infants:
- The parent is responsible for what
- The child is responsible for how much (and everything else)

The parent helps the infant to be calm and organized and feeds smoothly, paying attention to information coming from the baby about timing, tempo, frequency and amounts

The Division of Responsibility For Toddlers Through Adolescents
- The parent is responsible for what, when, where
- The child is responsible for how much and whether

Jobs parents need to do with feeding include:
- Choose and prepare the food
- Provide regular meals and snacks
- Make eating times pleasant
- Show children what they have to learn about food and mealtime behavior
- Not let children graze for food or beverages between times
- Let children grow up to get bodies that are right for them

Fundamental to parents’ jobs is trusting children to decide how much and whether to eat. If parents do their jobs with feeding, children do their jobs with eating:
- Children will eat
- They will eat the amount they need
- They will eat an increasing variety of food
- They will grow predictably
- They will learn to behave well at the table

Crossing the lines of Ellyn Satter’s Division of Responsibility in Feeding is likely to create feeding problems and distort growth. Trying to control what or how much a child eats or how his body turns out crosses the lines. So does letting the child dictate the family menu. For a further explanation of the division of responsibility, see any of Ellyn Satter’s four books; Your Child’s Weight: Helping Without Harming, Child of Mine: Feeding With Love and Good Sense, Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family, or How To Get Your Kid To Eat... But Not Too Much.

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