



*Are you struggling
with your toddler at
mealtimes?*

How Your Feeding Style Impacts Mealtimes

Your feeding journey may not be as simple as you expected. Whether there have been issues with weight gain, picky eating, or intolerances/allergies, you may have ended up becoming either an authoritarian or indulgent feeder. With the best intentions, parents who are fearful of poor nutrition or growth will use a variety of strategies to increase intake.

Which feeding style sounds like how you approach mealtimes with your child?

Authoritarian (controlling)

- Forceful, restrictive, structured, low in nurturance
- Dominates the feeding situation
- Uses forceful and restrictive strategies to control mealtimes
- Speaks loudly to get the child's attention
- Uses force-feeding
- Overpowers the child

Authoritative (democratic)

- Involved, nurturing, structured
- Engages in conversation and eye contact with child during mealtimes
- Provides clear communication regarding expectations
- Responds to hunger and satiety cues
- Feeds infants directly, assists older children with self-feeding

Indulgent (permissive):

- Involved, nurturing, unstructured
- Provides no guidelines regarding food intake
- Uses food as a reward
- Uses food as a comforter or to control a child's behavior

Consequences of your feeding style

Try this!



Good news! Changing YOUR behavior at mealtimes can have a significant impact on how your child eats. Increasing structure and consistency while eliminating pressure can lead to more enjoyable mealtimes for all.

Eliminating pressure can start with establishing the "Division of Responsibility" at mealtimes, which is an approach created by Ellyn Satter, nutritionist and expert on supporting the mealtime dynamic. For more information, go to www.ellynsatterinstitute.org and start making changes today!

Sharing this information with caregivers can also be helpful if there are other adults who are consistently sharing mealtimes with your child.

Authoritarian (controlling)

- Distress and/or avoidance
- The child displays negative behavior, such as refusing to eat, crying, and being distracted or picky
- Poor self-regulation (response to natural hunger and satiety)
- Could lead to overweight or underweight

Authoritative (democratic)

The child learns:

- To self-regulate food intake via hunger and satiety cues
- To self-feed
- That mealtimes are fun

The child develops healthy eating habits, accepts food when it is offered, learns that the caregiver responds to his or her hunger and satiety cues in a responsive manner.

Indulgent (permissive):

- Child has an increased intake of food that is high in salt and sugar
- Child has a low intake of fruit and vegetables
- Child may be overweight or obese
- The child decides when and what to eat, as well as how much