

Your Child's Weight – Helping Without Harming

By: Ellyn Satter, MS, RD, LCSW, BCD

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PROS

This book provides a unique perspective in that it advocates a non-restrictive approach to feeding children. It emphasizes good parenting with respect to the provision of food, feeding dynamics and physical activity.

Ellyn Satter defines her signature “division of responsibility in feeding”:

- Parents are responsible for the what, when and where of feeding
- Children are responsible for the how much and whether of eating

This approach focuses on positive relationships and developing trust in your children to learn to enjoy food in the amounts that will help them grow appropriately and have the bodies that nature intended for them. The book advocates for the importance of family meals as a means of providing structure and reassurance of adult support.

Satter argues that a controlling parent who deprives a child of certain foods to help with weight control will cause harm and eventual weight problems. There are good examples of feeding problems and solutions, related through case studies based on the author's experiences in her clinic. The book contains good information to help a parent understand when a child's accelerated weight gain maybe problematic.

CONS

A basic understanding of the food groups and knowledge of the nutritional value of foods is necessary before anyone can use this book successfully. The author does not provide sufficient information to help a parent plan nutritious meals and snacks. Reading this book can create a sense of guilt in a parent, as many common “mistakes” in feeding are cited.

BOTTOM LINE

This is not a nutrition or “diet” book. This book is about “how” to feed not “what” to feed. We recommend this book be read in age specific stages, as the text is lengthy and repetitive when read cover to cover. Health professionals such as dietitians and physicians and anyone who is involved in making decisions about children's nutrition should own a copy of this book. As a prerequisite, the reader must have a good understanding of basic nutrition principles. For a simpler read on the same feeding principles plus nutrition tips, parents of toddlers and preschoolers could read Satter's other title *Child of Mine, Feeding with Love and Good Sense*.