

A vibrant collage of various fresh and cooked foods. On the left, there are several red and yellow apples. In the center, there are green broccoli florets, a bunch of green basil leaves, and a cluster of red cherry tomatoes on their vine. To the right, there are several pieces of golden-brown, roasted chicken. At the top, there are whole oranges and orange slices. In the bottom right corner, there is a piece of cooked meat, possibly a steak or pork chop, with a dark, charred exterior. The overall composition is a rich and diverse selection of healthy food items.

Forming Healthy Habits:  
Children's Relationship with Food

# Why This Matters



## It Starts Early

Children as young as five can start feeling dissatisfied with their bodies or try dieting.



## A Growing Concern

Between 40% and 60% of children aged 6–12 are concerned about their weight or actively dieting.



## Rising Health Visits

Health visits for eating disorders in those under 17 more than doubled between early 2018 and 2022.

# What Is Intuitive Eating?



## Trust Your Body

A self-care approach that encourages trusting your body's natural signals to guide food choices.



## Make Peace with Food

A non-diet framework built on 10 gentle principles, including making peace with food and honoring hunger.



## Better Self-Esteem

Research shows intuitive eating can improve body appreciation, self-esteem, and reduce disordered eating.



## Physical Health

Supports physical health outcomes, including more stable weight and lower blood pressure.



## Parent as Role Model

By embracing your own intuitive eating journey, you help children feel confident and empowered around food.

# Practical Steps for Parents



## Change How You Talk About Food

Instead of "good" or "bad," focus on what food does.

*"Broccoli helps your bones so you can grow strong!"*



## Prioritize Family Meals

Eating together regularly reduces the risk of disordered eating, strengthens family connection, and encourages healthier food choices.



## Avoid Restrictive Rules

Restricting foods can make kids more focused on them, leading to sneaking or overeating. Trust your child's natural hunger and fullness cues.



## Division of Responsibility

**Parents decide:** what, when, and where.

**Children decide:** whether and how much – from what's offered.



## Rediscover the Joy of Eating

Small, gentle changes help children build a positive, joyful relationship with food that lasts a lifetime.

# The Division of Responsibility Model



## Parents: The What

Choose and prepare the foods, and decide what is offered at meals and snacks.



## Parents: The When

Provide regular meals and snacks with a predictable routine children can rely on.



## Parents: The Where

Decide where eating happens – ideally a calm, tech-free space that supports connection.



## Children: Whether & How Much

Children choose whether they want to eat and how much they need from what's offered – honoring their own hunger cues.

# References & Further Support

📄 References: Research on intuitive eating, childhood eating behaviors, and family meal benefits drawn from peer-reviewed studies and professional clinical frameworks. Reach out to an Ollie team member to learn more and schedule an appointment.

Intuitive Eating framework – Evelyn Tribole & Elyse Resch (10-principle non-diet model)

Division of Responsibility model – Ellyn Satter (dietitian and family therapist)

Research on childhood body image concerns – ages 5–12 and early dieting behaviors

Health visit data for eating disorders under age 17 – early 2018 to 2022

Studies on maternal eating habits and their influence on children's food behaviors