Every night millions of families gather to have dinner together. To make sure their kids eat well, some parents don’t allow more bread or pasta until their children eat more veggies or meat. If dessert is on the menu, many kids will need to demonstrate eating a good portion of what is on their plate if they want to participate in the fun. And some kids are asked to take a certain number of bites before they can leave the dinner table, whereas others are only offered foods they will eat in the first place.

The problem with these strategies is not only that research shows they are ineffective but also that most parents don’t always think them through or even realize why they feed in this way. They really have no plan or preparation when it comes to feeding—no real feeding strategy. They are simply struggling to get healthy foods into their kids, day in and day out.

Why is this? Our culture of feeding is very short-term focused and quick to offer advice on what to feed, rather than on how or why. Take the baby food-making craze as an example. Most babies only accept pureed foods for a few months until they transition to table foods, yet the focus is on buying equipment and spending hours making baby food. Although we acknowledge the importance of feeding babies whole food ingredients (what), we also encourage parents to introduce as many flavors as possible, because it’s the rare time children will accept and try almost any food (why). We also ask parents to bond with their
children through feeding and invite their little ones to join the family table early (how) to help prevent feeding problems later on.

Megan was shocked when she heard her one-year-old could join her and her husband at the dinner table. “My daughter, thirteen months, was eating completely separate meals, very bland, and usually pureed,” she says. “When I used your suggestion and gave her a chopped version of our adult food, she ate every single bite and loved it! Now we eat the same food every night, from curry to tilapia to tacos. Who knows how long our daughter would have kept eating baby food unnecessarily!”

Our culture’s short-term view of feeding and tendency to look for a “quick fix” keep you from understanding that every feeding stage is connected. It’s vital to be prepared for (and possibly prevent) the challenges that await, something health professionals call “anticipatory guidance.” After all, how you feed your baby will affect how he will eat as a toddler. How you feed your toddler affects how she will eat as a school-age child. And just when you think you have everything figured out, your child becomes a teenager who worries about body shape and size, experiments with dieting, and starts eating what his friends are eating.

You don’t have to be a registered dietitian to master the fundamentals of feeding your child—you just need an effective feeding strategy.

**Take the Long-Term View**

Feeding, carried out thousands of times in the course of childhood, is often laden with emotions and failures, and few home runs. But there is a way to make feeding easier, more rewarding, and effective—and it all starts with having a long-term view, which we outline in Table 1.1.
We have this “big picture” perspective with other aspects of our kids’ learning. We understand that it takes kids years to master reading and writing, and that all children learn at different rates. Even when our kids may be slower learners, we still feel confident that they’ll eventually get it. We need to have this same attitude about eating—all kids can learn how to eat well, but it takes time, patience, and courage to let each child learn at his own pace.

When you keep your focus on the long-term goal of raising a Fearless Eater, you will be less tempted to take part in the daily food drama—and this takes the pressure off everyone. You will begin to see the power your attitudes and actions have and how they shape your child’s emerging relationship with food.

**Fundamental 1: WHAT to Feed Your Child**

Simply put, the **WHAT** of feeding is all about *food* and *nutrition*. Although food is the aspect of feeding that is most talked about, it is also filled with its share of confusion and misinformation. One mom tells you that juice is bad, while

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**Table 1.1 Short-Term Versus Long-Term Feeding Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Short-Term View (No Real Strategy)</th>
<th>Long-Term View (Fearless Feeding Strategy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>getting kids to eat healthy today</td>
<td>Getting kids to eat healthy today</td>
<td>Teaching kids how to eat healthy for a lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents . . .</td>
<td>Are frustrated. They either give up or push kids too hard. There is tension at the table.</td>
<td>Are fearless. They are able to weather the storms and maintain a positive eating atmosphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children . . .</td>
<td>See food as good or bad. They may not regulate intake well (eating too much or too little). They associate food and eating with negative feelings or rewards.</td>
<td>See almost all food as enjoyable. They regulate intake well (eating the right amount for their body type). They enjoy eating and coming to the table most of the time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
another says it’s the only way she can get fruit into her child. One thing is for sure—food fads are not for children who rely on nutritious food to grow and develop. You need to know what to feed your child at each stage so you can match her nutritional needs.

When you have a basic understanding of your child’s nutritional needs—and how to meet them using food or supplements—it gives you peace of mind. After all, your child is undergoing a dynamic process called growth, and will therefore have different nutrient requirements throughout the stages of childhood. If you don’t understand this, as many parents don’t, you will be more fearful and likely to make mistakes in the name of nutrition.

Joy was so worried that her preschooler, Emily, was missing key nutrients by not eating vegetables (except corn and carrots) that she bribed her with dessert and hid greens in mixed dishes. One night Emily was so upset to see small pieces of broccoli in her favorite lasagna that she refused to eat dinner from then on. When Joy learned that her daughter didn’t have to eat a lot of vegetables to meet her needs, she couldn’t believe it. A variety of fruits along with Emily’s favorite vegetables were enough until her taste buds grew up and she could learn to appreciate the taste and texture of vegetables. It took Joy a little while to rebuild trust with Emily, but now Emily is eating dinners again—and even trying some vegetables on her own!

Understanding your child’s nutritional needs is vital, but so is navigating the not-so-good stuff children are naturally drawn to. Many kids are overexposed to foods that have little nutritional value and lots of calories—at sporting events, in schools, on advertisements, and in homes. Even our youngest toddlers have an unprecedented exposure to these foods, which is showing up in their weight as preschoolers and in their pickiness at the dinner table.

**Fearless Fact**

More than one-third of children have a diet that consists of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods, such as soda; fruit drinks; grain-based desserts like cookies, cakes, and pastries; dairy desserts; and pizza. Even our youngest toddlers have an unprecedented exposure to these foods, which is showing up in their weight as preschoolers and in their pickiness at the dinner table.
These factors make it important for you to shift the balance of what your child eats to healthier options and more food variety, while keeping nutrition-poor foods in check. What your child eats affects not only his overall health and wellness but also his lifelong food preferences.

**Fearless Food Guide**

The answer to fearless feeding is not to eliminate the foods that are everywhere but to learn—and teach kids—the art of balance. We believe all foods are “legal” and can fit into a healthy diet.

Children of all ages need an assortment of foods from the different food groups to meet their nutritional needs. We give you the specific recommendations for serving sizes and optimal daily amounts from food groups in the Nutrition in Practice sections throughout the age-based chapters.

The foods you provide most frequently will be nutrient-dense, what we call Nourishing Foods, and will be drawn from the major food groups: fruits, vegetables, dairy and nondairy, grains, meat and nonmeat sources, and fats. What we call Half-and-Half Foods are those that aren’t as nutrient-dense but still supply important nutrients. These will be offered less often.

The Fun Food category includes the foods that offer little nutrition but big taste, such as sweets and fried foods. We generally follow the 90:10 Rule by striving for a diet that contains about 90 percent Nourishing and Half-and-Half Foods, with the remaining 10 percent made up of Fun Foods, as detailed in Table 1.2. On some days, kids will eat more, and on others less, from each food category, but the goal is an overall diet that is balanced to be mostly nutritious while leaving room for enjoyable treats.

**Fearless Tip**

Rotate different fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products, and protein sources frequently in your child’s diet. The more variety your child eats from within the Nourishing Food category, the better her chances are of meeting specific nutrient requirements. Remember not to get hung up on how your child eats on one day; instead, consider her intake over the course of the week.
Fine-Tuning Nutrients and Portions

Although our specific food guides will help you decide what types of food to offer and how often, children won’t always eat in a balanced manner. That’s why we highlight the Fearless Five Nutrients in each Nutrition in Practice section. These will help you identify the typically low nutrients for each age group and fill in with alternative nutrient-rich foods to match your child’s nutritional needs.

### Fearless Fact

During the past forty years, portion sizes have increased substantially in stores, in restaurants, and at home. For example, twenty years ago a blueberry muffin was about 1.5 ounces and 210 calories, whereas today the typical muffin is 5 ounces and contains 500 calories!

**Table 1.2** Food Balance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Food Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nourishing Foods</strong></td>
<td>Offered daily, and frequently throughout the day</td>
<td>Fruits; vegetables; whole grains; lean protein sources (lean meats, poultry, fish, and beans); healthy fats; and low-fat dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Half-and-Half Foods</strong></td>
<td>Offered daily or weekly—less frequently than Nourishing Foods</td>
<td>Fruit and vegetable juices, refined grains, full-fat dairy, high-fat meats, and animal fats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fun Foods</strong></td>
<td>Offered least frequently—making up about 10 percent of the diet</td>
<td>Cake, cookies, candy, ice cream, chips, and fries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fine-Tuning Nutrients and Portions**

Although our specific food guides will help you decide what types of food to offer and how often, children won’t always eat in a balanced manner. That’s why we highlight the Fearless Five Nutrients in each Nutrition in Practice section. These will help you identify the typically low nutrients for each age group and fill in with alternative nutrient-rich foods to match your child’s nutritional needs.

Portion size is another factor to consider. We believe that children should eat until they’re satisfied, which sometimes translates into having seconds or even thirds (usually during growth spurts). We also live in a portion-distorted nation, where portions are larger than life. Instead of portion control,
we like to think of it in terms of portion awareness, especially as children get older, eat out more often, and become influenced by their environment. Knowing what a normal portion looks like for your child at each stage will help you teach your child portion awareness as he progresses through childhood.

You also have endless decisions to make in terms of meal preparation and food choice. In our Real, Easy Recipes sections, and in Chapter Eight, Getting Meals on the Table, we help you get started. All of our recipes are intended for the busy parent—requiring simple ingredients and little preparation time. And we help you interpret food labels so you can make the best choices for your family.

Our goal is to take the confusion and guesswork out of food and nutrition—simplifying and streamlining feeding. Obviously, understanding the what is very important, but knowing what to feed isn't the whole enchilada. Read on for more about the fascinating and underrepresented how of feeding.

Fundamental 2: HOW to Feed Your Child

Have you ever really thought about your approach to feeding? Is it nurturing, demanding, or controlling? Are mealtimes pleasant or a chore or something in between?

How you feed your child is extremely powerful. Your attitudes, your actions, and the structure you set at mealtimes are the basis for the parent-child relationship, which can be positive or negative, potentially coloring how your child views the world of food, eating, and his own self. Mastering this aspect of feeding has the potential to transform the mealtime dynamic—something food could never do alone.

How you feed is a key to preventing many childhood eating problems, including obesity, picky eating, dysfunctional attitudes about food, and eating disorders.

Meal Structure: A Parent’s Secret Weapon

Shari had never heard about the how of feeding—in fact, she was very proud of her nutrition knowledge and the emphasis she placed on healthy food in her home. She spent a lot of time making sure that meals were organic, fresh, preservative- and additive-free, home cooked, and heavy on fiber. Despite the
quality and health of the meals, her five-year-old, Will, wasn’t eating well. In fact, he was outright refusing most of what was offered him. Worried about Will’s weight, Shari began to offer him his few favorite healthy foods at any time of the day. Feeding Will became a chore and a worry for everyone. And Will was in the trap of eating the same foods every day.

Like many American mothers, Shari was sold on the promise that getting food “right” would naturally lead to a healthy child. But it didn’t. In fact, it led to a child who was small for his age; who was eating less than he should and at erratic times; and who was in control of his mother, the food, and the family meal.

The first thing we did when working with Shari was address the structure and timing of her son’s meals and snacks. We asked her to use a feeding structure that provided meals and snacks at three- to four-hour intervals, and to stick to a set location where eating happens, preferably the kitchen table. We assigned times for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and a midmorning, afternoon, and before-bedtime snack. We emphasized that the responsibility of determining the feeding structure lay with the parents, not their son.

Adding structure accomplished two important things: it provided several opportunities for Will to get adequate nutrition throughout the day, and it prevented major swings in appetite (feeling too hungry or too full). It also allowed Will to eat for the perfect reason—hunger—and to refuse to eat if he was not hungry, putting the control over his internal appetite regulation in his hands. We discuss further the benefits of structure when you need it the most—the toddler years (see Chapter Three).

**Structure + Fearless Feeding Style = Success!**

Although structure is important, so is your feeding style—the basic approach you use or your manner when you interact with your child around food and eating.
This attitude and your actions during mealtime have a profound effect on how your child eats.

Research defines four common feeding styles: authoritarian, permissive, neglectful, and authoritative. Parents generally use all four styles in day-to-day feeding, but one style usually dominates. Knowing your own tendencies in regard to your approach to feeding, and its consequences, is an important connection to make as you become a Fearless Feeder.

**Authoritarian Feeding Style**
A common approach to feeding is “Just do as I say,” whereby the parent sets and enforces rules around food and eating, with minimal regard for the child’s food preferences or hunger and fullness signals. The parent has high expectations and strict rules around eating performance.

Elizabeth experienced this feeding style as a child. She described being forced to “eat what she was served” and “clean her plate” before she could leave the dinner table at night. There were nights as a young child when she sat at the table until nine or ten o’clock at night because she wouldn’t eat her green beans.

According to research, children raised with this approach lose sight of their own hunger and fullness

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**Fearless Fact**

*Transgenerational feeding* connects how you feed your child today to the way your own parents and grandparents fed their children. Simply put, many parents either “inherit” their feeding style from their own parents, or may reject their parents’ style and feed in an opposite way (more on this in Chapter Six).

**Fearless Fact**

Daily feeding practices aligned with an authoritarian feeding style include rewarding, restricting, and pressuring or prompting. *Rewarding* is used to get children to eat better or to eat certain foods (like vegetables). *Restricting* can take the form of limiting access to certain foods or controlling the amounts children eat. And putting on the pressure or prompting is another way parents try to get their kids to eat certain foods, or eat more, at mealtime.
signals—they don’t know when to stop eating and may ignore body signals telling them it is time to eat. As a result, children may overeat, leading to weight problems. Also, children eat fewer fruits and vegetables with this approach compared to other feeding styles.

**Permissive Feeding Style**

This feeding style is characterized by parents’ oversensitivity to the hunger and fullness cues of their child, while having low expectations around eating behaviors and meal structure. The parent who uses this style may be referred to as a “yes” parent who maintains few boundaries around food and eating and is prone to allowing the child to consume anything he wants.

Elizabeth is a classic example of a parent who rejected the feeding style that was used during her own childhood. Because she was raised with an authoritarian feeding style, she adopted an opposite feeding style with her own children—the permissive style. Elizabeth often allowed her kids to eat anything they wanted, or to eat anytime they indicated they were hungry—even shortly after a meal. Many activities were centered around food, and the meal structure was very loose.

Kids raised with the permissive feeding style eat more sweets and high-fat foods than children raised with any other approach to feeding. Children may gain too much weight, and in the long run may be out of touch with knowing how much food—or which types of food—to eat. You can see how this can be a recipe for lifelong eating struggles and weight problems.

That’s why Elizabeth sought help. She was dealing with an overweight five-year-old and a very picky eight-year-old. The mealtime environment was so problematic, it was affecting everyone in the family—nobody was happy at meals,

**Fearless Fact**

Daily feeding practices aligned with a permissive feeding style include constant feeding (letting children graze on food all day), short-order cooking, and allowing children to make most of the food choices during mealtime. Children who graze all day from constant feeding usually eat too much or too little, and children who know an alternate meal is waiting for them are less likely to expand their food repertoire.
and the physical health of both of her boys was taking a hit. Elizabeth realized that her upbringing dictated how she fed, and it was having a negative impact on her own children.

**Neglectful Feeding Style**
This feeding style is characterized by low sensitivity to a child’s needs around food and eating, and few expectations concerning mealtime and eating behavior. Parents may fail to stock and shop for ingredients or to plan and prepare meals in a regular and timely manner, and they may “fly by the seat of their pants” when it comes to meal structure and content.

Grace Anne’s mother was not intentionally neglecting to feed her daughter, she was just very busy. Working out of her home and managing a packed work travel schedule, in addition to raising a child, was difficult. When deadlines were pressing, shopping and cooking fell to the bottom of the list. Meanwhile, Grace Anne compensated for this chaotic and unpredictable food environment by ensuring that she would never go hungry, hiding food in her closet and keeping chocolate under lock and key in her trinket box.

In the case of a neglectful feeding style, food may be a low priority for the parent, but it becomes a high priority for the child. Children raised with this feeding style tend to be insecure about food, overly focusing on food and perhaps asking many food questions (“When are we eating?” “What are we eating?” “Will there be enough?”). Because children are fixated on and insecure around food, they may overeat or undereat, and they may have difficulty trusting their caregiver when it comes to food.

Many of the daily feeding practices associated with common feeding styles have a “reverse effect,” resulting in the opposite outcome of what is intended. When parents reward their child for eating vegetables with dessert, for example, the child places a higher value on the dessert (reward food). And when parents restrict their child’s access to sweets to help her eat less, the child values and wants those restricted foods even more and is more likely to eat them, even when not hungry. Pressuring children to eat also results in poor eating. In fact, pressuring kids may lead them to experience early fullness, a worsening in their picky eating, and poor weight gain.
According to a 2007 study published in *Appetite*, 85 percent of parents try to get their children to eat more at meals using reasoning, praise, and food rewards.\(^\text{19}\) Because these feeding practices are so ineffective and tiring, we often see parents give up entirely or go back and forth between an authoritarian (controlling) and a more permissive (no boundaries) feeding style. Yet research shows there is a better and much more effective way of feeding.

**Authoritative Feeding Style (a.k.a. the Fearless Feeding Style!)**

The most effective and positive approach to feeding children is an authoritative feeding style, characterized by responsiveness to the child, structure and boundaries around mealtime, and respect for the child's food choices. The parent takes care to ensure that meals and food are served on time, responds to the child's hunger and fullness, allows reasonable choice around food, and lets the child regulate his own eating (deciding how much and which foods to eat).

Julie didn’t appreciate her parents’ feeding style until she went away to college. She noticed her friends went crazy with their newfound freedom around food, while her interest in nutrition grew. Her parents were authoritative feeders, providing reliable, healthy meals while never pressuring her to eat more or less. They were relaxed about Fun Foods but offered them less often—and didn’t make a big deal about healthy eating, even when she went through stages of trading lunches and ordering onion rings at restaurants.

Children raised with this feeding style tend to have a healthy weight, be good at self-regulating their own eating, eat healthier types of food (vegetables, fruit, and dairy products), and be more physically active.\(^\text{9}\) The key to this feeding style’s success is the warmth and

**Fearless Fact**

The feeding practice aligned with an authoritative feeding style is Ellyn Satter’s Division of Responsibility in feeding, whereby parents determine the *what, when, and where* of feeding, and children decide the *whether and how much* of eating.\(^\text{3,8}\) It’s based on *trust and choice*: the child trusts that the parent will come through with reliable meals, the parent trusts that the child knows how much to eat—and the kid ultimately understands that he has the choice to eat or not.
Table 1.3 Parent Feeding Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeding Style</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Authoritarian (controlling) | **Kid:** “I’m done.”  
**Parent:** “You’re not done yet, four more bites or else no dessert for you.” | The child may have a loss of appetite regulation and be less likely to eat fruits and veggies. This feeding style is correlated with overweight and obesity. |
| Permissive (no or few boundaries) | **Kid:** “Can I have a cookie, Mom? Please!”  
**Parent:** “I guess so . . . you really shouldn’t since you have been snacking all day. But okay.” | The child is likely to eat more sweets and high-fat foods, gain weight, and have a reduced ability to self-regulate eating. |
| Neglectful (not a priority) | **Kid:** “What’s for dinner, Mom? Do we have any food?”  
**Parent:** “We’ll figure out something dear, give me a minute.” | The child is worried and anxious about food, and overeats or undereats. The child may develop trust issues with the caregiver and with food. |
| Authoritative (leadership and autonomy) | **Kid:** “Can I have a free cookie from the store bakery? Please!”  
**Parent:** “Dinner is only an hour from now, and I don’t want you to spoil your appetite. The next time we shop during snack time you can have one.” | The child self-regulates eating and is aware of appetite cues. The child eats more fruit, vegetables, and dairy products, and is more physically active than children raised with the other feeding styles. |

Responsiveness of parents along with high expectations and consistency around food and eating.

Table 1.3 sums up the differences between the four feeding styles. Being responsible for your child’s feeding is like being a boss. If you’ve ever had a boss who tightly regulated every move you made, you know how it degrades self-confidence and makes work drudgery. The walk-all-over-me manager lacks the leadership needed to be effective and gain respect. And the boss who never seems to be around or give you any support makes you worry about how you are
going to get your work done properly. It’s the boss who provides leadership, compliments you effectively, trusts you, and finds a balance of freedom and support who inspires you and makes you want to work hard.

We hope you now understand that how you feed—the structure, feeding style, and practices—is vital in shaping your child’s relationship with food. Now that we have introduced the what and how, there’s one more component to the Fearless Feeding Strategy that takes this entire approach to a new level.

**Fundamental 3: WHY Your Child Behaves That Way**

Children weave through expected and typical aspects of child development and relate to their environment based on their own temperament. Although it can drive parents crazy, most kids aren’t behaving like this intentionally.

Knowing what to expect and why your child behaves the way he does with food gives you peace of mind. From expecting that your toddler will be picky to understanding why your teen eats out more often than not, knowing your child’s developmental stage and temperament helps you anticipate, understand, and react appropriately to his behavior.

**Child Development Is Predictable**

Child development occurs on a continuum, with predictable characteristics that can influence eating. During infancy, babies are a blank slate, and everything they do (and you do) is an imprint on their memory. Their main job is to form an attachment to their caregiver. They are learning how to trust you, that you are dependable and that the world is a good place to be. Feeding your baby provides an opportunity to develop this attachment. Toddlers spend their time separating from you and exploring the world around them—and that includes the world of food. Getting messy with food can be frustrating for parents, but it is developmentally productive for the toddler. Besides, at what other time

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**Fearless Fact**

Many of the things that frustrate you about your child—picky eating, an erratic appetite, and being highly influenced by friends’ eating—are a normal part of development.
in life do you get to lather yourself in yogurt? By school age, kids are more skill oriented and influenced by a growing body of friends, community members, and neighbors. The world is creeping in, and your kid is soaking it up, because that’s what children do at this age—they learn and develop skills. When they learn new skills and become “good” at them, their self-esteem starts to blossom. Just as those skills and new confidence accumulate, the grade-schoolers turn into teenagers, ready to experiment, make decisions for themselves, and be independent. Once again, the normal process of separating from you occurs for the last time as your teen prepares for adulthood.

**All Children Have Their Own Food Personality**

Not only do you need to anticipate your child’s development but also you want to be mindful of her temperament. Is she demanding? High maintenance? Easygoing? Difficult? Or is she sometimes one and sometimes the other? Your child’s temperament can influence how well she reacts to, accepts, and eats foods on any given day. For example, positive encouragement to eat can be met with rebellion or complete refusal with the stubborn child, whereas little pushes with an easygoing child may work like a charm. Oftentimes you don’t know until you try (and get instant feedback), but appreciating your child’s temperament can help you tailor your interactions so that they are most effective and positive for all.

“My daughter, Kendall, is four and a very picky eater,” says Nicole. “I often say her eating habits are payback for all the times I smugly thought that my son’s eating habits, who has always been easy to feed, had something to do with my parenting.” Each child experiences his own taste and texture world. Some are more sensitive to the bitter taste of vegetables, whereas others are not. The same family may have one child who is a sensory seeker, enjoying different textures and spicy foods, and another child who is more sensitive, needing increased time and patience. Our experience has taught us that each child accepts food in her own unique way, with the following tendencies:

- **Eager eater:** Otherwise referred to as an “adventurous eater,” this eater will try and accept new foods easily, and learns to like a variety of foods sooner than most children. These eaters often have big appetites.
• **Somewhere-in-between eater:** Most children fall into this category. This eater is cautious with new foods, but over time and with exposure he gradually adds a variety of foods to his repertoire.

• **Cautious eater:** Some children are extremely timid with food—slow to try new foods and careful, typically revealing this eating style when solid foods are started. Some children may even be “supertasters,” with a heightened sense of taste (which may or may not make some foods taste offensive), or may be more sensitive to all of the sensory components of food (taste, smell, texture, and appearance).

The fundamental **why** gives you an understanding of who your child is, where he is in his developmental stage, and what is normal behavior for him—priceless information for successful feeding.

**Fearless Tip**

Don’t judge your success as a feeder by your child’s fruit and vegetable intake or the number of foods she will eat. Children go through different stages, learning to eat a variety of healthy foods at different paces. We believe all children can grow up to be Fearless Eaters. You’re doing a good job if your child enjoys eating and is being exposed to a variety of foods.

**Putting It All Together**

Many parents have one or maybe two of the Fearless Feeding Strategy components up their sleeve, but few have all three. The **what**, **how**, and **why** are extremely powerful when used together.

Now that you are familiar with the Fearless Feeding Strategy, you can begin to see how dependent each component is on the others. When just one of these elements is missing, feeding can go awry and become challenging. Always return to each of the fundamentals when you or your child begins to struggle with nutrition, at any time. Check your **what**, **how**, and **why**, as outlined in Table 1.4, so that you can pinpoint where feeding has gone haywire—something we help more with in the Real Life Challenges sections.

This is the beginning of a transformation that has the power to change your whole family’s eating habits and relationship with food. With this complete
### Table 1.4 Fearless Feeding Fundamentals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT: Food and Nutrition</th>
<th>HOW: Attitudes and Actions with Feeding</th>
<th>WHY: Behavior with Food and Eating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding nutrient needs</td>
<td>• Using structure with feeding</td>
<td>• Appreciating the stages of child development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improving food quality and incorporating variety</td>
<td>• Adopting an authoritative feeding style</td>
<td>• Understanding your child’s unique food personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Balancing Nourishing, Half-and-Half, and Fun Foods</td>
<td>• Avoiding negative feeding practices</td>
<td>• Acknowledging child temperament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Paying attention to portion awareness</td>
<td>• Seizing opportunities for nutrition education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

knowledge of feeding, and a long-term view, you will feel more confident with the decisions you make. This allows you to take control of what you can and let go of the rest. Congratulations, you are on your way to becoming a Fearless Feeder!