



Evaluation Rubric from the Perspective of ecSatter and fdSatter Nutrition Education Programs and Materials ©2016 Ellvn Satter. MS. RD. MSSW

This rubric is intended to assist you, the nutrition educator, in writing educational material and conducting programming consistent with the principles of the Satter Eating Competence Model (ecSatter)^{1,2} and the Satter Feeding Dynamics Model (fdSatter).^{3,4} Study the definitions of the models outlined in the references and in the descriptive paragraphs. Use the checklists to help you reflect on your attitudes, determine whether you have included key messages, and been successful in avoiding messages that are contradictory to the models. Reflect on your attitudes: ecSatter and fdSatter do not attempt to motivate clients or try to *get* them to eat certain foods in certain amounts. Instead, the models consider healthful eating to be a shared value and trust clients to learn and grow.

ecSatter and fdSatter

ecSatter and fdSatter are *trust-based* models. That is, they are predicated on the utility and effectiveness of biopsychosocial processes:

- Hunger and the drive to survive.
- Appetite and the need for pleasure.
- The social reward of sharing food.
- The biological propensity to maintain preferred and stable body weight.

Enjoyment, comfort, relaxation, and acceptance are integral parts of ecSatter and support the development of lifelong eating habits that are consistent and rewarding. “When the joy goes out of eating, nutrition suffers.”⁵ While ecSatter and fdSatter do not address what or how much to eat, people who are eating competent have diets of higher nutritional quality,^{6,7} have the same or lower BMI,^{6,8} have better medical and lab tests,^{9,10} sleep better,¹¹ are more active,¹² and do better with respect to feeding their children.^{13,14}

Transition from control to trust

The nutrition field is in transition from the control- and prescriptive-based approaches of the conventional model to the ecSatter and fdSatter trust-based models. Change is difficult. Control-based messages may creep into your programming, despite your careful study, philosophical commitment to ecSatter and fdSatter, and sincere desire to produce trust-based materials. The insidious nature of controlling messages presents a serious problem, as those dilute, distort, and undermine the effectiveness of fdSatter and ecSatter. Many find that prescriptive food selection messages are so deeply embedded in their thinking that those messages seem to be the only possible ways of doing nutrition education! In reality, once you begin to think in terms of the trust model, you will find you have much to offer with respect to helping your clients find creative and individualized solutions to their food-management and child-feeding challenges.

Trust-based educator-client relationship

ecSatter and fdSatter are also trust-based with respect to your attitude toward and relationship with your client. The conventional, control approach is to tell others what and how much they should eat and what they should weigh. The control attitude is that clients must be motivated to do the “right” thing with food selection and weight management. In contrast, the trust model allow you to offer your services, invite clients to work with you, encourage them to identify their food-related conundrums, join with them in finding solutions, and identify those solutions as *possibilities*, rather than as shoulds and oughts. The trust

attitude is that eating healthfully and behaving responsibly with respect to body weight are shared values between you and your client and that growth is inherent in the ecSatter and fdSatter models. Your clients will work on their own behalf and bring themselves along when you collaborate with them in finding their own practical and rewarding ways of managing eating and food.

NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

Eating competence has to do with the attitudes and behaviors that ensure getting *fed*. The priority with ecSatter is enhancing and dignifying the importance of eating by making it positive, joyful and intrinsically rewarding. Eating competence as defined by ecSatter is being positive, comfortable and flexible with eating as well as being matter-of-fact and reliable about getting enough to eat of enjoyable and nourishing food. ecSatter trusts the powerful and reliable tendency to eat satisfying amounts of rewarding food and to maintain stable body weight that is in keeping with the individual's genetic endowment and lifestyle.³

ecSatter is evidence-⁵ and practice-based.³ It outlines an inclusive definition of the interrelated spectrum of eating attitudes and behaviors. According to ecSatter, competent eaters, 1) have positive attitudes about eating and about food, 2) have food acceptance skills that support eating an ever-increasing variety of the available food, 3) have internal regulation skills that allow intuitively consuming enough food to give energy and stamina and to support stable body weight, and 4) have skills and resources for managing the food context and orchestrating family meals.³

ecSatter-based nutrition education for adults⁶

- Stresses the practical task of getting fed.
- Builds on the food-management values and capabilities of the individual.
- Works toward individually defined routines of eating management that are intrinsically reinforcing.
- Maintains a positive tension between permission and discipline:
 - The permission to eat preferred foods in satisfying amounts.
 - The discipline of having structured meals and snacks and giving time and attention to eating.

Attitude

- Emphasizes positive attitudes and behaviors with respect to eating.
- Emphasizes food *seeking* rather than food *avoidance*.
- Assumes that clients will act on their own behalf to learn and grow.

Context

- Prioritizes structured meals and sit-down snacks as needed.
- Offers strategic collaboration in accomplishing the task of getting fed, including practical information about budgeting, planning, purchasing, storage, and cooking.
- Stresses food enjoyment.
- Stresses tactics for planning achievable, satisfying, and rewarding meals and snacks.
- Dignifies individuals' own food traditions and preferences and joins with them in using food they prefer and find accessible.
- Considers Satter's Hierarchy of Food Needs⁷ in addressing food management for individuals at various levels of food security.
- Teaches foods groups only within the context of meal- and snack-planning.

Food Acceptance

- Stresses variety based on genuine enjoyment of food as the basis for achieving nutritional adequacy.
- Endorses the individual's own food traditions and preferences.

- Helps identify the nutritional value of preferred food.
- Uses experiential programming to support and improve food acceptance capabilities.
- Offers the theoretical (e.g. nutrition and food composition) only in the context of managing the practical.
- Offers approaches for enhancing the flavor of foods by using fats, salt, and sugar.
- Manages fat, salt, and sugar by emphasizing variety.
- Offers tactics for incorporating foods of lower nutrient density, such as high-fat, high-sugar snack foods.

Food Regulation

- Stresses capabilities with internal regulation of food intake to support energy balance and stable body weight.
- Stresses tactics for getting enough to eat, including choosing food of adequate caloric density.
- Stresses letting body weight/BMI be what it will in response to genetics as well as to competent and consistent eating and activity.
- Uses experiential programming to support and improve food regulation capabilities.

Approaches to Nutrition Education that are Inconsistent with ecSatter

- Directly or indirectly teaches portion sizes or numbers of servings from food groups.
- Teaches target weights or target BMIs.
- Prescribes food-selection standards and applies external motivation to promote adhering to those standards.
- Emphasizes “shoulds” rather than “wants” or possibilities.
- Categorizes foods as good or bad (or even better and worse).
- Emphasizes the health benefits of certain foods or warns about the health consequences of consuming other foods.
- Applies *shoulds* or *oughts* to the consumption of certain foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole-grain or low-fat, low-sugar, low-salt food.
- Applies *shoulds* or *oughts* to the avoidance of certain foods, such as sweets, high-fat foods, high-salt foods or fast food.

NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR PARENTS

The Satter Feeding Dynamics Model (fdSatter) is a set of practice- and evidence-based principles and recommendations addressing the relationship between parents (or other responsible adults) and children around feeding.^{1,2} The fundamental principle of fdSatter is that, provided parents do a reasonably good job with feeding, children grow up to be eating competent.

- They develop positive attitudes toward food and eating.
- They learn to enjoy the food their parents and other valued adults eat.
- They eat as much or as little as they need to grow predictably in the way nature intended for them.
- They develop skills that allow them to participate happily in family meals.

Effective feeding is based on a division of responsibility.² For the infant, the parent does the *what* of feeding and depends on information coming from the infant to determine everything else: how often, how much, at what tempo, and at what level of skill. For babies making the transition to family food, parents are still responsible for *what* and they are becoming responsible for *when* and *where*. The child is still and always responsible for *how much* and *whether*. Beyond infancy, the parent becomes responsible for the

what, when, and where of feeding and the child continues to be responsible for the *how much* and *whether* of eating. Adolescents gradually learn to do food management so after they leave home they can handle the *what, when, and where* for themselves. However, throughout high school, children continue to depend on parents to take leadership with feeding and to maintain the structure of family meals.

ecSatter- and fdSatter-based nutrition education for parents

- Parent-focused. Materials and programs address the parent's role in feeding.
- Emphasizes the division of responsibility in feeding.
- Teaches child development as it relates to feeding: Gives accurate and concrete information identifying children's stages in feeding and parents' tasks in feeding in a developmentally supportive fashion.
- Teaches authoritative parenting as it relates to feeding. Authoritative parents are warm and supportive and maintain a balance between taking leadership with feeding on the one hand and giving children autonomy with eating on the other.
- Assumes that children will push themselves along to learn and grow when parents follow sDOR and provide them with a positive feeding and food environment.

Parent leadership

- Teaches and supports parents in doing their tasks with feeding.
- Prioritizes enjoyable family meals and sit-down snacks.
- Stresses planning meals that are considerate (of the learning eater) without catering (limiting the menu to foods children readily accept).
- Stress offering regular sit-down snacks that with two or three foods that include carbohydrate, protein, and fat).
- Stresses allowing children eat they want from what parents offer.
- Stresses allowing to eat as much as they want at meals and snacks.
- Stresses avoiding between-times food and beverage handouts, except for water.
- Helps parents find their own ways of having rewarding, sustainable family meals.
- Demonstrates how to appropriately and flexibly include high-fat, high-sugar foods, such as chips, cookies and candy.
- Manages fat, salt, and sugar by emphasizing variety.

Child autonomy

- Once they have done their tasks with feeding, teaches and supports parents in trusting children to do their tasks with eating.
- Teaches parents normal child food acceptance behaviors with respect to eating some of what parents put before them and gradually learning to enjoy the food parents eat.
- Teaches parents normal child food regulation behaviors with respect to eating more some meals or some days than others and varying from one child to another.
- Teaches parents that children can be depended upon to grow in the way nature intended, even if weight is relatively high or low, provided weight follows a particular growth trajectory.

Approaches to Nutrition Education that are Inconsistent with ecSatter and/or fdSatter

- Gives children grownups' jobs. Teaches children what or how much they should eat.
- Assigns children an independent role in food management.
- Directly or indirectly tells what or how much a child should eat or how much they should weigh.
- Manipulates food selection for children in order to achieve a defined weight outcome.
- Directly or indirectly categorizes foods intended for children as good or bad (or even better and worse).

- Directly or indirectly categorizes types of family *meals* as good or bad, such as home-cooked (good) or fast-food (bad).
- Directly or indirectly emphasizes children’s eating certain foods or categorizing those foods as “healthy,” such as fruits and vegetables.
- Directly or indirectly emphasizes children’s eating low-fat foods or categorizing low-fat foods as “healthy,” such as low-fat milk and dairy products.
- Directly or indirectly emphasizes the exclusion of certain foods or categorizing these foods as “unhealthy,” such as sweets or chips.
- Directly or indirectly encourages or endorses any means for attempting to manage what or how much children eat, including motivating, reasoning, forcing, bribing, coercing, nudging, applauding, rewarding, explaining, teaching, restricting, tricking, running out of food or conspicuously modeling the eating of certain amounts or types of food.
- Directly or indirectly applies pressure on a child’s weight and/or encouraging weight loss, for instance, talking about being “healthy” or “fit.”

NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN⁸

Nutrition education that is consistent with fdSatter and ecSatter emphasizes the experiential and avoids the theoretical. It maintains children’s intuitive eating capabilities and builds eating competence in a stage-related, developmentally appropriate fashion. Children are born with the drive to eat, the ability to eat as much as they need to grow predictably, and with the drive to learn to eat the food their grown-ups eat. Adults support children’s inborn eating capabilities by providing leadership and giving autonomy. Children push themselves along to learn and grow when their trusted adults regularly and reliably provide them with adequate amounts of a variety of wholesome food in a positive feeding environment and let children determine what and how much to eat of what grown-ups offer.

Young children do best when they are allowed to eat—or not eat—what grownups provide and allowed to be free from worry about eating, weight, or activity. Throughout primary and secondary school, children depend on their grown-ups to manage the food context. Toward the end of grade school, children gradually begin to learn food management by doing some food selection for themselves and mastering the practical skills they need for feeding themselves. Throughout high school, adolescents build food-management skills so by the time they leave home, they are able to manage for themselves the *what*, *when*, and *where* of eating.

ecSatter- and fdSatter-based nutrition education

- Provides children with regular and reliable access to a variety of food that is chosen by adults.
- Within the context of adult leadership with food management, gives children autonomy with respect to *what*, *how much*, and even *whether* they eat.
- Emphasizes and instills positive attitudes and behaviors with respect to eating, food, family meals, and meals in a group setting.
- Provides experiential learning to support children in being relaxed and curious about unfamiliar food and able to eat as much or as little as they are hungry for.
 - Experiential learning gives children repeated neutral exposure to unfamiliar food rather than persuading or motivating them to eat it.
 - Experiential learning reassures children there is enough to eat but that they don’t have to eat anything they don’t want to.
- Does menu planning that is considerate without catering: Pairs familiar with unfamiliar food, liked with not-yet-liked foods. Having familiar foods at mealtime makes children braver about exploring the unfamiliar.

- Gives young children the support of trusted adults in unfamiliar eating settings.
- Generates parent-education materials that are consistent with the previous section, *Nutrition Education for Parents*.

Young children up to age 12 years

- Emphasizes experiential learning. Avoids cognitive learning.
- Teaches children how to manage unfamiliar food in unfamiliar places: how to say “yes, please,” and “no, thank you.”
- Teaches foods and food groups neutrally in a staged fashion: identification, sorting, categorizing, history, culture, ecology.
- Avoids emphasizing certain foods as being good or bad, such as fruits and vegetables (good) and sweets (bad). Designating foods as “sometimes foods” and “red light/green light” classifies them as good or bad.
- Teaches “your body knows how much you need to eat.”
- Teaches about energy needs from the perspective of fueling the body for getting through the day.
- Teaches about food intake, body size and shape, and growth from the point of view of individual differences.
- Teaches that every body is a good body.

Children age 12 years and older

- Teaches how to apply food group information to meal- or snack-planning.
- Gradually teaches food-management skills in a stage-appropriate fashion.
- Identifies the body’s signals that support internally regulated food intake.
- Stresses the genetic components of size and shape and the futility of trying to force a particular size and shape.
- Addresses diversity and acceptance of variation in size, shape, BMI, and physical capability.
- Teaches foods and food groups neutrally in a staged fashion: nutrient contributions, role of nutrients in the body.
- For adolescents, considers food management from the perspective of achieving the practical task of getting fed.
- For adolescents, considers food selection from the perspective of risk management. For instance, what are the consequences of regularly choosing soda rather than milk?

Approaches to Nutrition Education that are Inconsistent with ecSatter and/or fdSatter

- Making young children (under age 12) responsible for choosing food for themselves.
- Telling children of any age what and how much to eat.
- Putting pressure on children to eat certain amounts or types of food, such as so many servings of fruits and vegetables.
- Teaching numbers of servings from food groups or portion sizes. Categorizing foods as good or bad (or even better or worse).
- Directly or indirectly motivating children to avoid or choose certain foods by use of words such as “benefits,” “healthy,” “low-fat,” “low-sugar,” and “moderation.”
- Warning children to avoid certain foods, such as foods of low nutrient density.
- Setting up good-food, bad-food dichotomies.
- Teaching calorie prescriptions for food intake and activity and/or giving lessons about cognitively balancing calories in and calories out.
- Promoting weight management, restricting food intake or direct or indirect means of lowering body weight.

Guidelines for citation

Ellyn Satter's principals and guidelines for feeding have been in the lay literature since 1983 and the professional literature since 1986. Her principals and guidelines for eating have been in the lay literature since 1997 and the professional literature since 2007. Ethically, Ellyn Satter must be cited in articles and educational materials based on her principles and guidelines. Here is how you can handle these citations:

Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding (sDOR)

You may cite sDOR this if it is written exactly as in <http://bit.ly/198hDow> with the following wording: © 1986 by Ellyn Satter. For more about sDOR see <http://bit.ly/14GESSL>. For more about sDOR-based feeding, see <http://bit.ly/11msykC>

As indicated above, to abbreviate, use sDOR. Note that sDOR says “choose and prepare the food.” It does NOT say “choose and prepare *healthy* food.” Inserting the word “healthy” constitutes incorrect and unethical citation.

General feeding advice

The feeding advice in this article (power point, etc) is based on Ellyn Satter's principles and guidelines. For more about Satter's work, see <http://ellynsatterinstitute.org>

Satter's Eating Competence Model

You may cite this if it is written as in <http://bit.ly/1SSWqV1> with the following wording: © 2007 by Ellyn Satter. For more about ecSatter see <http://bit.ly/1SSWhko>. For more about doing nutrition education with ecSatter, see <http://bit.ly/1SSVLTq>

General eating advice

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For more information about fdSatter and ecSatter, see Ellyn Satter's *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*, Kelcy Press, 2008, *Your Child's Weight, Helping Without Harming*, Kelcy Press, 2005, and *Child of Mine; Feeding with Love and Good Sense*, Bull Publishing, 2000. For examples of applying fdSatter and ecSatter in nutrition education, see the How to Feed and How to Eat tabs on www.EllynSatterInstitute.org as well as other resources and articles.