Authors’ Response:
Satter and Lohse raise some interesting points in their letter regarding our paper. However, the philosophy behind this study is not as dissimilar to that presented by Satter and Lohse as might first appear. We concur with the basic tenets of division in responsibility in feeding and do not advocate pressuring feeding practices, particularly the use of verbal pressure focused on consuming specific amounts of foods (eg, eat all of your broccoli). However, fruits and vegetables are not sufficiently well accepted into our adult diets, and acceptance of healthy, less-palatable foods is not a behavior that always naturally develops to satisfactory levels once children pass through the neophobic phase.1,2 Furthermore, children who are higher in neophobia and food selectivity early in life still have a poorer range of acceptance into adulthood.3 Together this evidence suggests that a laissez-faire approach, relying on exposure to facilitate acceptance, may not be the most effective strategy for encouraging acceptance of less-palatable foods into our children’s diets.

Satter and Lohse state that our data show a high level of children’s food refusal in response to a high number of parental prompts. High rates of verbal pressure, physical prompts, and bargaining/reward were associated with high rates of refusal. However, the critical point in this paper was that physical prompts and rewards were also associated with greater acceptance of the new fruit. This suggests that the conceptualization of what constitutes pressurizing prac-


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tices may need to be more nuanced, and that the description of the use of physical prompts as a pressurizing practice is not accurate.

We propose that the potential mechanism of action for physical prompts is to increase engagement with the sensory properties of the foods, which may facilitate children’s decisions about how much and whether to accept that new food. Physical prompts include behaviors such as passing the fruit to the child, holding the fruit up to the child’s line of sight or under the nose to facilitate smelling, or replacing a removed fruit back on the child’s plate. Similarly, offering small, non-food rewards may encourage children to have that first positive sensory experience with a food, which in turn may lead to later willing tasting. By facilitating repeated and positive taste exposure, these new but less-palatable foods are more readily accepted into children’s diets. Ours is certainly not the first study to demonstrate the importance of reward programs and adult modeling of new foods over simple exposure, and the importance of authoritative parenting in fruit and vegetable acceptance in childhood and adolescence. The food environment in which the child is raised is, of course, likely that different child characteristics may dictate the effectiveness of different strategies for facilitating short- and long-term acceptance of fruits and vegetables into children’s diets. It is quite likely that different child characteristics may dictate the effectiveness of different strategies on food acceptance, and that neutral repeated exposure for many children may be sufficient to encourage acceptance of less-palatable foods into the diet. However, for those children whose individual differences predict greater reticence to try new foods, parental practices that do not pressure consumption, but encourage engagement with the new foods, may be advantageous. Given that parental use of verbal pressure to eat is widely used and typically detrimental to acceptance, we need to investigate and develop parental advice regarding practices that both encourages short-term acceptance, but that also have the goal of facilitating lifelong liking and adult choice of healthier foods.

Jacqueline Blissett, PhD
Reader in Childhood Eating Behavior
School of Psychology University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK

Suzanne Higgs, PhD
Reader in the Psychobiology of Appetite
School of Psychology University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK

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