

Your preschooler will do best when you use an *authoritative* approach to parenting. Authoritative parents are good leaders. They give guidance, set limits, and enforce rules, but treat their child like a small person. They are respectful of their child's feelings, thoughts and wishes. Sorting out your feeding jobs from your child's eating jobs is an *authoritative* approach to parenting. You take leadership by keeping yourself responsible for what, when, and where your child is offered food. You give your child autonomy within those limits by letting him determine whether and how much of the food that you offer.

### **KEY TOPIC #1: PARENTING THE PRESCHOOLER WITH FEEDING**

If all has gone well when your child was a toddler, he learned that he is his own person and also learned to be part of the family. He can now be more cooperative, settle down to learning and doing, and depend on you to guide him. If he *can't* do that, he is still fighting the toddler's control battles. Your preschooler will resolve these toddler struggles if you are careful to parent authoritatively, with feeding and in all ways. Be particularly careful not to get into struggles for control.

#### **Eating Competence**

Following your child's lead with feeding supports him in continuing to develop eating competence. If have been sorting

out your feeding jobs from your child's eating jobs until now, he:

- Feels good about eating.
- Goes by his feelings of hunger and fullness to eat as much or as little as he needs.
- Has made headway with respect to learning to eat the food you eat.
- Knows how to behave at family meals and is relaxed and comfortable there.

Raising your child to be a competent *eater* helps raise him to be a competent *person*. Feeding so your child eats well is all about loving and respecting him and trusting him to do his part. That lets him feel good about himself, be comfortable and relaxed with himself and other people, and be able to work things out with other people.

**Leader notes:** At this point, parents have been told what they need to know. However, they won't remember this information, may not accept it, and won't be able to apply it. This lesson helps them grapple with the information and make it their own. That allows them to be resourceful rather than just following a set of instructions. They will also be less vulnerable to counterproductive feeding advice.

### **KEY TOPIC #2: WHEN FEEDING IS GOING WELL**

#### **View Flor and Discuss**

*Preview comments:* After all the mishaps of feeding the toddler, it is striking to watch 4 ½ years old Flor eat in such a neat and orderly way. She can even spoon up broth without spilling it! When feeding is going well, it seems easy. What do Flor's parents do to allow Flor to do so well with eating? To guide you in answering the questions, read the handout, *Your jobs and your preschooler's jobs with feeding*.