The Dangers of Weight Focused Interventions with Children and the War on “Combatting Obesity”

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Why am I here today?
• RD 24 years 😄
• Clinical Professor at Iowa State University
• Iowa Academy Representative
• St. Germain Consulting: Redefining Health—Nutrition for ALL Bodies
• Advanced areas of expertise
  • Certified Intuitive Eating Counselor
  • Craving Change Counselor—Cognitive Behavior Therapy
  • Eating Disorders—awareness, prevention and treatment
  • Health at Every Size® (HAES®) & Health For Every Body Facilitator
  • Non-diet Weight Neutral Registered Dietitian
  • Body Respect & Size Acceptance
• Finding my passion

Objectives
• Explore the harm associated with weight focused interventions with children
• Learn weight neutral non-diet approaches for children’s well-being and how to transfer that knowledge to parents and caregivers
• List three considerations before initiating baby led weaning
• Differentiate between dairy and non-dairy alternatives with regard to pediatric nutrition
Weight Stigma

• Definition
  • Weight bias or weight discrimination
  • Shame, judgement, inequalities and stereotypes placed on individuals based on weight and body size.

Adapted from BEDA National Weight Stigma Awareness Week materials

Weight Stigma

• Origins
  • Media portrayal
  • Societal pressure regarding obesity
  • Healthcare
  • Wellness/Fitness Industry
  • Culture blaming the individual
  • General belief: lazy, lack of willpower & discipline

Adapted from BEDA National Weight Stigma Awareness Week materials

The Harm Associated with Weight Stigma & Weight Centered Health Paradigms

• Hinders communication
• Shame and scare tactics cause adverse problems
• Increases likelihood of poorer health behaviors
  • Increased kcal consumption
  • Weight gain
  • Decreased motivation to exercise
  • Increased risk for chronic disease
  • Avoidance of appointments with health care professionals
• Lifelong battle with weight

Pearl et al 2018 Weight Bias Internalization and Health: a Systematic Review
O’Hara et al What’s Wrong with the War on Obesity?
Harm of Weight Focused Diets

• Weight stigma & discrimination
  • Culture obsessed with weight and food
  • Diet industry and diet mindset for the “obesity epidemic”
  • “Fat” phobia
  • Dislike/Fear of becoming “Fat”

• Dysfunctional Eating & Eating Disorders
  • Delay in diagnoses/treatment of those in a larger body
  • Psychological and emotional damage
  • Yo Yo dieting and dangers associated
  • Body composition changes
  • Slow metabolism

Language of Change

**Weight Stigmatizing**

• Overweight/Underweight
• Obesity
• Skinny
• Fat
• Combating Childhood Obesity
• War on Obesity
• Obesity Epidemic

• Title of Webinar “Tackling Childhood Obesity One Bite At a Time”

**Weight Neutral**

• Higher/Lower Weight
• Living in a larger body
• Person of size
• Middle of the road
• Fat
Can You Really Control Your Weight?

- We aren’t supposed to live our lives scared of food and weight
- We have less control of our weight than we think we do
  - Genetics
  - Biology
- Starvation occurs even in a larger body
  - Body will do everything it can to stop starvation
    - Slow metabolism
    - Increase cravings and thoughts about food

Peer Reviewed Research to Support Weight Neutral Approach

- [www.IntuitiveEating.org](http://www.IntuitiveEating.org)
  - Handout with 40+ research articles with summaries updated 2015
  - Handout with research articles (includes above citations) but without summaries updated 2018
  - Certification of becoming an Intuitive Eating Counselor

- [https://lindabacon.org/_resources](https://lindabacon.org/_resources) Health at Every Size

Elly Satter

[https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/](https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/)
Division of Responsibility

Parent's Job
- Choose & prepare food
- Provide variety
- No short order cooking
- Provide regular meals/snacks
- Pleasant meal times
- Model behavior and etiquette
- Avoid hovering and pressure
- Don't allow food/bev between meals/snacks (just water)

Child's Job
- Children will decide how much
- They will model parents behavior and food choices
- They will grow even if they don't eat as much as you think they should
- Not same amount of hungry daily
- They will learn etiquette from modeling but not pressure

Feeding Problems and Solutions

Picky Eating
- Picky Eating is VERY NORMAL
- Problem occurs if pay too much attention to it
- Too much juice
- Too much milk
- Eating between meals or snacks
- Lack of structure
- Too much structure
  - Hovering
  - Pressure
- Short order cooking
The Child Who Eats “Too Little”

- Innate cues of hunger and satiety
- Chances are there is not a problem
  - Some eat a lot; some don’t
  - Some who eat a lot are still “slim”
  - Some are just small and some are just big
- Growth Chart Interpretation
  - Feed as if not worried about their weight
  - No drinks other than water between meals/snacks
  - Avoid pressure

The Child Who Eats “Too Much”

- Children eat too much if
  - Food is restricted or meals and mealtime lack in structure
  - Someone tries to get them to eat less than they want
  - Restricting “forbidden foods” or pushing low kcal foods
  - Giving the look...
- Children not same amount of hungry each day
- Feed as if not worried about their weight
  - Have same meal for everyone
  - If family is having dessert, so will child

The “Underweight” Child

- Feeding errors that can further decrease weight
  - Pressure and interference makes children eat less not more
  - Lack of structure
The “Overweight” Child

• Feeding errors
  • Pressure and interference on type and portion
    • Sneaking food
    • Bingeing on restricted food
  • Lack of structure

Address Child’s Weight with Division of Responsibility in Feeding

• https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/child-weight-issues/
• “Overweight” and “Obesity” are not useful when applied to individual children
• Growth chart interpretation

Avoid Pressure

What does pressure look like?

• Praising, reminding, bribing, rewarding, applauding, playing games
• Restricting certain foods, coaxing, punishing, shaming, withholding food or activities
• Encouraging to smell, taste, “no thank you bites”
Avoid Pressure

Pressure Backfires long term
• Trying to get child
  • to eat more ⇒ eats less
  • to eat less ⇒ eats more
  • to eat certain foods ⇒ avoids them
  • to be neat ⇒ messy

Avoid Restriction

Avoid these sneaky ways because they backfire
• Controlling portion sizes
• Banning second helpings
• The “look”
• Running out of food on purpose
• Banning or rarely allowing sweets, candy or “treat” foods
• Cooking “diet” food

Language of Change

Avoid
• “Eat 3 more bites”
• “Eat vegetables before your dessert”
• “Eat this so you are big and strong”
• “If you eat this, you can have candy later”

Try this
• Division or Responsibility
• Model behavior
• Family meals at a table
• Minimize distractions
• Pleasant conversation
• Avoid pressure
Normal Eating

“Normal eating...is going to the table hungry, & eating until you are satisfied.

Normal eating...is being able to choose food you enjoy and to eat it and truly get enough of it—not just stop eating because you think you should.

Normal eating...is being able to give some thought to your food selection so you get nutritious food, but not being so wary and restrictive that you miss out on enjoyable food.

Normal eating...is giving yourself permission to eat because you are happy, sad, or bored, or just because it feels good.

Normal eating...is mostly 3 meals a day—or four or five—or it can be choosing to munch along the way.

Normal eating...is leaving cookies on the plate because you will let yourself have cookies again tomorrow, or eating more now because they taste so great.

Normal eating...is overeating at times, and feeling stuffed and uncomfortable...and undereating at times and wishing you had more.

Normal eating...is trusting your body to make up for your mistakes in eating.

Normal eating...takes up some of your time and attention, but keeps its place as only one important area of your life.

In short, normal eating is flexible...it varies in response to your hunger, your schedule, your food, and your feelings.”
Children’s Books on:
Body Respect; Hunger/Satiety Cues; Mindful Eating

Key Points
• Division of Responsibility
• Ellyn Shatter’s definition of ‘Normal Eating’
• Child is not same amount of hungry eat day
• Child will not starve to death skipping a meal
• Picky eating is common among children

Key Points
• Pressure and hovering causes exact opposite of outcome wanted
• Encourage children to explore food, be curious about food, taste and be joyful about food
• Avoid scaring, shaming, about “obesity”
• Children grow differently and can be healthy at 5% or 95% if following their growth curve
Hot Topics

Halloween Candy

• Provide meal before going out to collect candy
• That night and next day—unlimited access to the candy
• Days following
  • Serve a nutrient dense snack along with candy
  • Only rule is they have to stay seated while eating
    • This avoids grazing problem
• Avoid portion control and restricting comments or “the look”
• Outcome: they will likely overeat the candy at first but later will lose interest and forget about it.

Baby Led Weaning

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Baby Led Weaning (BLW)

• Definition
• How it works + resource
• Examples
• Considerations
• A dietitian’s perspective

Definition

A method of introducing solid food into a baby’s diet by allow them to feed themselves, as opposed to being spoon-fed.

My daughter eating (more like exploring) a red pepper strip at 7 months

How it works

• Slowly introduce food in large, stick shapes so that the child can grasp the food
• The child learns to ‘gnaw’ on the food at her own pace and only bite off as much as she can chew

This image is from Feeding Littles, which is a very helpful website and Instagram account for BLW
How it works

- Highly, highly recommend this book as a resource and guide!
- It’s important for parents to be educated before beginning BLW

Examples

My son at 7 months eating homemade macaroni and cheese

My daughter at 8 months eating whole strawberries and slices of toast for snack at daycare.

Considerations

• Regardless of feeding method... parents MUST know CPR! Purees can be choked on just as easily as solids.
• EXPECT A MESS
• Childcare/daycare
  • Provide resources and support
  • Offer to bring food the first week
  • Text w/ menu questions
  • Communicate!
Helpful Products

• No special equipment is needed!
• And... some products make BLW even more fun:

A Dietitian’s Perspective

• Kids learn to eat what the family is eating (i.e. no short order cooking)
• Children are allowed to explore food, as opposed to forcing
• Learning to feed themselves helps with motor skills
• Increases children’s ability to be independent, which helps them to feel more confident
• Decreased picky eating

100% recommend encouraging Baby Led Weaning to families!

For more information, or to download a free guide to family feeding, go to: www.lisanolting.com
More Info on Lisa Nolting MFCS RDN LD

• I’m growing an online community of busy women who want to enjoy food while respecting the body they’ve been given. For those who are moms: I provide the tools they need to feed their family with confidence.
• I have a weekly newsletter and blog where I share tools and resources – download the free guide on my website to access my free weekly resources. www.lisanolting.com
• I will soon be launching a membership site, where I will provide monthly coaching calls, a recipe bundle, and a monthly challenge to help women end their food battles once and for all. hello@lisanolting.com

Dairy

Pediatric Population
• Dietary Guidelines for America recommends:
  • 3 servings for children 9 years and older
  • 2 ½ servings for children 4-8 years old
  • 2 servings for children 2-3 years old
• Low-fat/low-milk contributes approximately:
  • 60% vitamin D,
  • 33% calcium,
  • 19% potassium,
  • 13% protein, only
  • 7% calories
• Alternative beverages fall short
• If a true dairy allergy exists, soy most closely matches milk’s nutrient profile
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