

MULTI AWARD-WINNING KIDS COACH

**JUST
SAY
YES!**

HELPING KIDS LOVE FOOD FOR LIFE:

DISCOVER YOUR FOODY STYLE,

SURPRISING INSIGHTS AND ADVICE!

JO JOSEPH



Just Say Yes!

Helping Kids Love Food for Life:
Discover your Foody Style,
Surprising Insights and Advice!

Jo Joseph

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ISBN:

Dedication

For my Co-Foody Dada,

Thank you for embracing the word “Yes” and helping to make family time around our table a place filled with love, connection, exploration, and laughter.

Love, always

Foody Mama

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Preface

Hello, Mama (Daddy, Nan, Grandpa, Aunt, Uncle, Carer)!
As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child!”

Welcome to The Bite Club Co. and the *Just Say Yes!* Guide, also known as the *Food Parenting Style Guide!* Research shows that each of us fall into one of four main food parenting styles; Indulgent, Controlling, Uninvolved, and Diplomatic. In this guide, we’ll explore each style, providing surprising insights and practical advice to help you shape a food approach that nurtures your child’s love of food for life.

There are two things we can be sure of:

1. As adults, our food habits often mirror those of our own parents or caregivers, blending their approach with our personal experiences.
2. Kids learn from us. We are their role models (and heroes!), and they mimic our actions, language, and even our attitudes toward food.

Feeding children a nourishing diet is one of the most challenging roles we have. The daily struggles with fussiness, time, cooking skills, rising food costs, and the pressure to say or do the “right” thing can make it feel even more difficult. Our beliefs, behaviours, and language around food are complex and can vary from day

to day. But understanding our own food style can make feeding kids easier and more rewarding.

I'm here to reassure you that meal and snack times don't have to be stressful. With a little awareness and some tried-and-true tips, you can turn meals and snacks into moments of joy, connection, and curiosity!

This guide will help you explore some familiar food beliefs and practices, blending science-backed insights with practical tips to help you create a style that works for you and your child. After all,

***How you Feed your Kids
is just as Important as What
you Feed them!***

Start Your Journey with the Free Guide:

- Fussy to Foody: Bite Starter Kit

A gentle introduction to the unique BITE method, which helps you set boundaries, make eating inviting, help build trust and encourages exploring food together. With this book, you can be rest assured, you're setting the foundation, making food fun, whilst providing a balanced and varied diet!

To get your free guide, head over to our website, social media or email us at hello@thebiteclubco.com.

Now, let's dive in! Grab a snack (just for you, no sharing!) and let's begin discovering your foody style. Start with this first activity:

Activity 1: Are you a 'Yes' or 'No' Person

On a regular day with your kids, track how many times you say “yes” and how many times you say “no.” For each “yes,” reflect on whether you truly meant it or it was the last resort because you felt backed into a corner, and for each “no,” try to reframe it into a positive statement. For example, instead of saying, “No, we can't go to the park because it's too late,” try “Yes, we can go to the park tomorrow after breakfast!”

At the end of the day, look back at your “yes” and “no” responses. You might be surprised at how often “no” slips in, often more than we realise. Notice if reframing “no” responses create a more positive atmosphere and helps keep the communication open and upbeat. This simple activity can be a great way to notice patterns and help to start saying “yes”, in a considered way, a little more! You might be surprised by how a simple change can shift the tone of the whole day!

With love, laughter, and encouragement,

Jo Joseph @The Bite Club Co.

Multi Award-Winning Child Nutrition Coach

1. The Indulgent Style

The *Indulgent Food Style* could be described as the “yes to everything, no boundaries”, approach. Imagine a restaurant with a fully customizable menu where your child gets to make all the calls, no broccoli required, and a sweet dessert is always an option. The *indulgent* food style is primarily led by the child’s wants, requests, and demand. Being indulgent means a tendency to prioritise keeping children happy and satisfied, *without question*. When it comes to food it often means a lot of grazing and extra treats, all of which are granted with a smile.

This style fosters a sense of freedom and builds independence, allowing children to feel heard and appreciated. However, it can also make introducing new foods and balanced meals a bit of a challenge, as the focus is often on keeping things easier and enjoyable.

In this style, the motto might be something like, “Ask enough times, and ye shall receive!” Boundaries tend to be flexible, and routines around meals and snacks are often a bit looser, which can make for an adventurous (and sometimes unpredictable) approach to food. Here’s what the *indulgent* style often looks like:

Lax Food Rules: Food rules and limits are either loose or adjusted frequently based on the child’s requests.

Focus on Preferences: Often hypersensitive to food preferences, meaning a strong response to a child’s likes and dislikes (especially dislikes!).

Persistence Pays Off: While “no” may be the initial response to extra food or treat requests, continued please or demands may turn that “no” into a “yes” over time.

Flexible Routine: Meal and snack times are generally less structured, meaning eating happens whenever the child asks for food.

In many cases, this approach could work well when it comes to building a close adult-child bond, creating a positive atmosphere where food is seen as something enjoyable rather than stressful. However, when children consistently has free rein over their food, it can lead to a unintentional long-term habits that may need to be addressed later. Kids who grow up with few food limits might struggle when it comes to trying new foods or following a balanced diet that includes a range of flavours, textures, and nutrients.

Example of the Indulgent Style

Picture this: You’re in the supermarket, and your child spots the sweets at the checkout. The requests start: “Can I have it? Please? Pleeeeease?” You stick with “no” a few times, but as the volume increases (along with the looks from fellow shoppers), you decide, “okay, yes, have it.” Sound familiar? This pattern is a classic hallmark of the Indulgent style. This is different to saying ‘yes’ with intent or purpose but rather a feeling of you have to.

Potential Long-Term Impact

While the indulgent approach brings plenty of joy and freedom to the table, it can often create unhealthy patterns that shape a child's relationship with food as they grow. The approach comes from a place of wanting to make kids happy and avoid conflict. However, consistently saying "yes" to demands and without boundaries can shape a child's relationship with food in a few ways. Here are a few possible long-term results of indulgent food style:

Preference for Comfort Foods

When kids are used to having their favourite foods on demand, they may develop a stronger preference for comfort foods over a balanced diet. A plate filled with fruits and veggies might look less appealing if they're accustomed to regular 'treats' and grazing. Over time, they may start seeing these as a regular part of their day rather than as part of a balanced diet.

Less Sensitivity to Hunger and Fullness

Without routine meal and snack times, kids may struggle to identify when they're truly hungry or full. This can lead to "grazing" throughout the day, which can interfere with their natural hunger cues and appetite control.

Challenges with Boundaries

Without limits, kids may struggle to recognise when they're truly hungry versus when they just want something to eat that they have seen and like. When "no"

is consistently negotiable, kids may come to view food rules as flexible, leading to challenges with boundaries around food and meal and snack time behaviours as they grow older.

Selective Eating

An overly indulgent approach can sometimes reinforce selective eating behaviours. Kids might learn that they don't need to try anything unfamiliar if they can rely on their favourite foods. In time, this could make them more hesitant to explore new tastes and textures.

Balancing the Indulgent Style

If you identify with the indulgent style, don't worry, there's plenty of room to bring structure to the fun! It's possible to bring some gentle structure to the mix without feeling restrictive. Here are some strategies to help keep things balanced:

Create Routine

You can create a routine around when food is available, rather than having an open-door policy to the kitchen all day. Setting regular snack and mealtime routines helps children tune in to their hunger and fullness cues rather than resorting to grazing out of habit. You don't need a rigid schedule, a loose structure that keeps eating from becoming all-day events, with opportunities to access food every two to three hours. Table routines i.e. music playing can also make eating feel a bit more special, reinforcing that it's a time to enjoy food and family chat.

Build “Yes Moments” into the Routine

Give kids a chance to still feel in control with a few planned “yes moments”. Start by setting up a list of go-to snacks that includes a balance of healthier options and involve your child in building this list. Not only does it help them feel in control, but it also teaches them that a wide range of foods can be part of their choices. Offer a selection of two or three options rather than endless choices. Think, “Would you like carrots or apples?” rather than “Pick anything in the pantry.” By guiding them with a few structured options, you help foster independence while still encouraging balance.

For example, for a trip to the park, let them choose the snacks to take with them or for when they return decide on one fun meal element (like a dipping sauce or an extra veggie).

Think of the *indulgent* style as a mini-debate team in action, your child is honing their negotiation skills every time they ask for “just one more.” Setting gentle boundaries may feel like a win-win: fewer negotiations, and everyone leaves the table happy!

Activity 2: Eat the Rainbow

Make a list of colourful foods and invite your child to pick one colour to “try” each day of the week. Introduce a new food each day, making it fun and engaging. This helps to introduce a variety of foods, whilst still making children feel independent and part of the selection process.

2. The Controlling Style

The *Controlling* style is grounded in the principle that the adult is the “leader” and the child’s role is to “follow.” Think of it as a traditional, “you’ll eat what’s on your plate” approach, where rules are firm, and flexibility is limited. In this style there are:

- Strict food rules and eating limits
- Adults take charge of *what, when, and how much* is eaten, rather than following children’s natural appetite or preferences.
- Kids may not have much say in food choices, portions, or even whether they’re hungry.
- Children’s hunger or fullness cues may go unnoticed or overridden by adult expectations.

This structured approach is usually intended to provide a balanced diet and establish healthy habits, but it may also lead kids to feel they have little control over what they eat, which can impact their natural ability to regulate hunger and fullness.

Examples of the Controlling Style

In this style, food is often pre-plated, and meal and snack time rules set, which might sound like:

- “Have another bite, you’ve not eaten enough!”
- “Dessert allowed only if you finish your plate.”
- “You’re four years old so eat four potatoes.”

- “This meal took a long time to cook”

While these statements are usually said with good intentions, they can feel more like demands than gentle guidance, and turn eating into a power struggle.

Imagine being at a restaurant, and the chef tells you, “You can’t leave until you’ve finished every bite on your plate!” You’d probably feel a bit pressured yourself, and that’s exactly how kids may feel when they’re in a controlling food environment!

Growing up, I experienced a “controlling” food environment. Everything from when to eat, how much to eat, and whether pudding was allowed (only after the plate was cleared) was tightly regulated. Although it came from a place of care, this approach made eating feel restrictive rather than enjoyable.

As a teenager, I rebelled by eating whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted. Fresh cream cakes on the way to school, pick-and-mix sweets afterward, you name it! These choices weren’t driven by hunger but by a desire to feel in control. This personal experience taught me that how we approach food with kids can shape their relationship with food for years to come.

Potential Long-Term Impact

While the controlling approach is usually rooted in the desire to ensure kids have enough nutrition and learn to

eat a variety of foods, it can sometimes create unintended patterns in a child's relationship with food:

Loss of Appetite Control

Kids raised in a highly controlled food environment may struggle to tune into their hunger or fullness cues. They might overeat to meet requests to “finish your plate,” or they might eat less than they need because the pressure dampens their appetite.

Resistance to New Foods

When food is presented as a “requirement” rather than a choice, kids may become more resistant to trying new foods. This resistance often stems from feeling pressured and may make children hesitant to explore new tastes and textures on their own terms.

Less Enjoyment Around Mealtime

When eating feels like a chore or a test, kids may find it stressful rather than enjoyable. This can turn the table into a place of compliance rather than connection, affecting their lifelong relationship with food.

Balancing the Controlling Style

If you find yourself leaning toward this style, there are simple ways to add a touch of flexibility without compromising structure or goals. Allowing kids to have some choice and control during meal and snack time can help make eating feel less like a chore and more like a fun part of their day. Here are a few ideas for balance:

Offer Simple Choices

Even with a structured meal plan, giving kids a say in what's on their plate can make them feel more involved. Try offering two choices within your meal and snack time goals, such as “Would you like carrots or cucumbers?” or “Do you want yogurt or fruit for dessert?” This keeps your influence while empowering them to make small decisions that build confidence.

Encourage Small Portions with Room for More

Letting kids start with smaller portions can prevent the feeling of an overwhelming meal, which can sometimes trigger resistance. It's less daunting for them to finish a little bit and ask for more. If they're not hungry, you're reinforcing that it's okay to start small, and if they're hungrier than expected, they're free to ask for a bit more.

Praise Curiosity, Not Quantity

Try focusing on children's willingness to explore different foods rather than how much they eat. Instead of “You need to finish those peas,” try, “What do you think of the peas?” or “Do they taste sweet or salty?” This reframes the meal around curiosity rather than compliance, making it feel more like a choice.

For example, think of it as a mini “taste test competition.” Your child is the judge, giving each food a score (even if it's a 0/10 for broccoli squishiness).

Create Routine While Allowing Flexibility

Set clear boundaries about meal and snack times, so they know when to expect food, but add flexibility within those boundaries. For example, if they're not interested in lunch, reassure them they can wait until the next food time. It helps them understand routine but also respects their natural hunger cues.

Activity 3: Choice and Taste Tester

To make meals even more fun, try a “taste tester” challenge. After a meal, let your child pick one or two foods from their plate to “rate” it, using each of their five senses (taste, touch, sight, smell and sound).

This simple activity offers a small sense of control and turns the table into an opportunity to share their food thoughts, helping them feel more connected to what they've eaten, even if they don't finish every bite. The goal is to create positive meal and snack time memories.

3. The Uninvolved Style

The *Uninvolved Style* (sometimes called the “Un-Prepared” approach) is primarily guided by spontaneous decisions, often led by the child’s requests for food. In this style, meal and snack times lack routine and planning, creating a more unpredictable food environment. Here’s what this style might look like:

Lack of Structure: Rules around food are flexible or non-existent, and meal and snack times are inconsistent.

Food is Low Priority: Eating may be more about convenience than connection, with meal and snack times happening as needed rather than as a routine.

Ad-Hoc Preparation: Meals are often last-minute decisions, with little planning for grocery shopping or cooking, resulting in a limited selection.

Lack of Variety: Since meals and snacks aren’t planned in advance, the same few foods are offered frequently, which can limit exposure to new flavours and textures.

This style may stem from a busy schedule or simply from prioritizing other aspects of the day. While flexibility can be beneficial, the lack of structure may leave children uncertain about when or what they will eat, impacting their relationship with food.

Examples of the Uninvolved Style

Imagine a home where the fridge and pantry are rarely fully stocked, and meals are decided at the last minute. Grocery shopping may only happen once items run out,

leaving kids with limited food choices and little variety. Meal plans and snack options are often put together quickly, leading to inconsistent eating routines.

Picture your child asking, “What’s for dinner?” and getting a reply along the lines of, “Whatever we can find!” While a bit of spontaneity can be fun, the *Uninvolved Style* relies on “see what we have” a bit too often!

Note: this is different circumstances to the one in three families living in food poverty where the availability and access to food is a financial struggle.

Potential Long-Term Impact

While flexibility and spontaneity can be refreshing, consistently lacking structure around food can have lasting effects on a child’s relationship with food and eating. Here are a few potential long-term impacts:

Insecurity Around Food

When food isn’t consistently available or when eating is unpredictable, kids may feel insecure about when or what they’ll eat next. This can create anxiety, overeating and feel uncertain about meals and snacks.

Preoccupation with Food

Kids in an uninvolved food environment may start to focus excessively on food, asking frequently about the next meal or snack. This focus can lead to overeating when food is available, as they may worry about when they’ll next have access to a full meal.

Limited Food Preferences

Without exposure to a variety of foods, children in an uninvolved setting might become less adventurous eaters. They may feel hesitant to try new foods later on, or develop strong preferences for a few familiar options.

Balancing the Uninvolved Style

If you find yourself leaning toward the uninvolved style, don't worry, adding a little structure goes a long way. Consider setting up a simple plan for the week, even if it's just a list of a few go-to meals and snacks. This gives your child some reassurance and helps you feel prepared without too much effort.

Stock the Basics

Keep a few staple items on hand, like fresh fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins, so that quick meals are always possible. A well-stocked pantry means meal and snack times are easier to manage, even on busy days.

Create a Loose Meal Routine

Set a flexible schedule for meals and snacks so kids know when to expect food with five or six opportunities to eat. Even a loose routine provides stability and helps kids feel confident about eating without it being too rigid.

Involve Kids in Food Prep

Let kids join you in picking out snacks or choosing ingredients for a meal. When they feel included, they're

more likely to enjoy what's on the table and feel reassured that food is something they can depend on.

Activity 4: Meal Planning Together

Turn meal planning into a fun activity by letting your child help brainstorm easy meals and snacks for the week. Pop the list on the fridge or notice board so they have a reminder of what is planned (it's a great help for the grown-ups too).

This way, they'll feel more secure about what's coming and can look forward to their chosen foods. Giving them a say in what's coming up makes meals more exciting, and it also helps reinforce that food choices can be fun and varied without overwhelming them.

4. The Diplomatic Style

The *Diplomatic Style*, also known as the “Division of Responsibility,” is built on shared roles and mutual respect between adults and children and was developed by leading Dietician Ellyn Satter. This style encourages kids to develop independence and listen to their natural hunger cues within a clearly defined structure. Here’s what the *Diplomatic Style* generally looks like:

Clear Boundaries with Flexibility

Within set boundaries, children are encouraged to be independent and make their own decisions about eating, which helps them tune into their appetite.

Adult-Set Structure

Adults decide what food is served, where meals and snacks happen, and the timing of eating. A couple of food choices might be offered, but structure is maintained so children know what to expect.

Child-Led Decisions

Kids are trusted to decide whether they’ll eat and, if so, how much they’ll eat, giving them the chance to listen to their hunger and fullness cues.

In this style, adults provide the “*when, what, and where*” while kids handle the “*if and how much.*” This collaborative approach helps children feel more secure around food, as they know what to expect and are allowed to make choices within that framework.

Examples of the Diplomatic Style

Collaborative Shopping and Prep

Adults and children shop, prepare, and cook together, giving kids a say in meal and snack times as well as having family time, during the process.

Limited Choices

Kids may be given a choice between two options at mealtime (e.g., carrots or cucumbers). If they refuse, alternatives aren't offered until the next scheduled meal or snack. This approach allows them to exercise choice, within set boundaries, without undermining structure.

Trust in Hunger and Fullness Cues

Adults let kids decide how much they want to eat, trusting them to follow their appetite. This builds a sense of food security and helps children regulate their eating based on actual hunger.

Think of this style as a “food democracy.” You set the guidelines, and children get a vote within those boundaries. It's like running a restaurant where the menu is fixed, but there's always a daily special to give you a choice and keep things interesting!

Potential Long-Term Impact

The *Diplomatic Style* has been shown to promote positive relationships with food, as kids learn to trust their own bodies and enjoy a sense of independence.

Here are some possible long-term impacts of this approach:

Improved Appetite Regulation

Research shows that children raised with a diplomatic approach are better at recognising their own hunger and fullness cues, helping them eat the amount they need. This regulation can reduce the risk of overeating or undereating, as kids naturally learn to stop when full.

Increased Food Security

Children feel more secure around food, as they trust they'll always have consistent mealtimes and snacks. Knowing they have control over what and how much they eat helps them feel more confident about trying new foods without feeling pressured.

Healthier Eating Habits

Kids raised with the *Diplomatic Style* are often more willing to eat a variety of foods and tend to eat healthier options. This approach encourages a balanced diet, as kids feel safe exploring different tastes and textures without fear of pressure or punishment.

Balancing the Diplomatic Style

If the diplomatic approach appeals to you, here are some tips to maintain balance and keep it positive for, you, your child and the whole family:

Establish Routine with Flexibility

Maintain a regular schedule for meals and snacks, and gently encourage your child to stick to it. A familiar routine reassures them, while the flexibility of letting them choose how much to eat fosters independence.

Include Kids in Meal Decisions

Give kids the opportunity to choose elements of a meal, like a veggie or side dish. When children feel involved in the planning and preparation process, they are more likely to enjoy the food and feel invested in the meal.

Use “Yes” as Often as Possible

Focus on saying “yes” within the boundaries you’ve set. For example, “Yes, you can choose between apples or bananas” instead of “No, you have to eat what’s on your plate.” This positivity strengthens your child’s confidence in making food choices.

Activity 5: Star Ingredient Exploration

Pick a “star ingredient” for the week (like carrots or beans) and prepare it in different ways—raw, roasted, in a smoothie, etc. Let your child decide how much they want to try, turning food into a game of fun exploration.

And Finally...

As we reach the end of this *Just Say Yes!* journey, remember that our food styles are often deeply ingrained, shaped by our experiences and influences. These habits can be hard to spot, but by taking this first step of understanding, you're already empowering yourself to unpick any unhealthy patterns and nurture a positive relationship with food for your little one.

Know that you're not alone on this path, support, inspiration, and laughter are always nearby. Meal and snack times may not always go as planned, but with a flexible, open approach, you're creating a foundation for a joyful food journey for your child. Celebrate the small wins, embrace the learning moments, and remember to be kind to yourself. You're doing an incredible job!

Closing Activity: Reflect and Reset Take a moment to jot down any changes you've noticed at meal or snack times, in both you and your little one, since beginning this journey. Have there been any small breakthroughs or positive shifts? Use these reflections as reminders of how far you've come and keep looking forward to each new adventure ahead.

With love, laughter and encouragement, ***Jo at The Bite Club Co.*** Multi award-winning Child Nutrition Coach

Afterward

Join the Club

Thank you

I truly hope this guide has helped, even just a little, to deepen your understanding of the different food styles and make meal and snack times more enjoyable for you and your family. Food is a source of joy and connection, it's so much more than nourishment; it's a chance to create precious moments together.

As an independent author, your support means the world to me. If the information in this guide has helped you and your little one on the journey From Fussy to Foody, please consider leaving a review. Every review helps bring more attention to this guide and makes it easier for other parents and carers to find the support they need.

Further Support

The *From Fussy to Foody* series has even more resources to help along the way, including:

- 27-Day Bite Plan
- From Fussy to Foody Book
- Food Phrase Guide
- Kids Learn about Eating Book

You can explore these additional resources on our website at www.thebiteclubco.com, find them on our social media, Amazon and Etsy or contact us at hello@thebiteclubco.com

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We're excited to connect with you!

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