



The Emily Program

Personalized treatment for eating disorders.

Food, Eating, and Personal Relationships: A Comparison

Dietitian and therapist Ellyn Satter, MS, RD, LCSW, BCD is a pioneer in strategies that promote healthy relationships with food and eating. This chart compares Satter’s characteristics of what she calls “normal” (or natural) eating with the characteristics of healthy human relationships.

Natural Eating (Satter)	Healthy Relationships
Going to the table hungry and eating until you are satisfied	Feed your natural human hungers for connection, meaning, comfort, etc.
Choosing food you like and eat it and truly get enough of it	Involve people & situations you like and that are truly & mutually fulfilling
Not just stopping eating because you (or a cultural construct) think you should	Do not just end because a cultural construct thinks they should
Giving some thought to your food selection so you get nutritious food	Require thought and intention to your “partner” selection so you are nourished spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, etc.
Not being so wary and restrictive that you miss out on enjoyable food	Require not being so wary & restrictive that you miss out on enjoyable people & situations
Giving yourself permission to eat sometimes because you are happy, sad or bored, or just because it feels good	Involve giving yourself permission to participate & be together sometimes because you are happy, sad, bored, or just because it feels good
Mostly 3 meals a day, or 4 or 5, or choosing to munch along the way	Can mean being together occasionally, or nearly all the time
Overeating at times, feeling stuffed & uncomfortable	Can survive “overload,” recognizing the need for autonomy
Under-eating at times & wishing you had more	Can survive absence, recognizing how it makes the heart grow fonder
Trusting your body to provide cues & information	Develop using your instinct, emotions, sensations, etc.
Takes up some time and attention, but keeps its place as only 1 important area of your life	Take up some time and attention, but keeps their places among the other important areas of your life