

# Episode 28: Connection-Based Feeding & Mealtimes with Julie Zivah

**Christy Keating** 00:08

Hi friends and welcome to The Heartful Parent Podcast. I'm your host, Christy Keating. In this podcast, we talk about it all, our parenting, our partnering and our professional lives, because they are all a part of us. And we were never meant to do this alone

**Christy Keating** 00:40

Welcome back to the podcast friends. I've got a really interesting conversation and store for you today with a woman by the name of Julie Zivah. And before I tell you a little bit more about Julie, I just want to let you know that this is a conversation that pushes boundaries a little bit, it is a little bit uncomfortable, or at least it like it brought up some feelings of discomfort for me, because it pushes the way I think about food and eating and feeding our children, which is a really challenging subject for many of us as parents. And it's one that there is a lot of societal messaging around. And it's hard, right?

There are a lot of battles that we get into as parents with our children around these topics. And Julie Zivah really invites us to think about things differently in a way that as I said, it's kind of edgy, and it challenged me to think about things in a new way, and in a way that I'm really interested in and excited about. And I'm just going to start exploring a little bit in my own family.

So let me tell you a little bit about Julie before I just keep yammering on here, Julia is an advocate for the genuine human experience and living deliciously. She's a registered dietician, nutritionist and parenting educator who provides trauma informed Health at Every Size, and neurodiversity affirming care. Over the past 22 years, she has worked in community health, public health and private practice, to coach clients toward meaningful relationships with their bodies, people and nourishment.

And I think that description that biography of Julie says so much, because, you know, oftentimes when we think about food, we think about the specific nutrients and what's good and what's bad, and what's, you know, quote unquote, moral and not moral when it comes to eating. And, again, so many messages around this. And Julie really blows that wide open and helps us think about this in a new way.

Julie is going to explain to you what is meant by the Division of Responsibility, which is something I have used for years. Many of you may have used it for years, and she's going to explain why it's no longer sort of best practices, or based on the most recent research, and how what many dietitians are moving into now is this idea of Responsive Feeding.

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Responsive feeding is based on five core values, which she's going to talk about. And the five core values of Responsive Feeding, I think are things that you will get onboard with. There are certainly things that I talked about in episode after episode but have never really thought about in a key way as it relates to food.

So that's what Julie is going to help us do today. I invite you to dig in to get uncomfortable to challenge your own sort of thinking and beliefs around this and to explore some new ideas with me.

Without further ado, Julie Zivah.

Julie, I'm so excited to have you here on the heartfelt parent podcast. Thank you for joining me.

**Julie Zivah 04:06**

I am thrilled to be here. Thank you for having me.

**Christy Keating 04:10**

You know, as I was telling you, before we hit record, obviously, I've done a number of episodes yet, have not had anyone talking about food. And yet, if I speak with parents about the issues that plague them, food is always near the top of the list. So I'm really excited to be talking about this today. But I want to start with finding out a little bit about I mean, obviously I read your bio, but how did this become your life's work?

**Julie Zivah 04:37**

But it's essentially what you've just spoke to I you know, am a dietitian and I went through my practice and I ended up working in pediatric nutrition and working for public health and really kind of went into to nutrition thinking I would help families raise children who are well and that was raised Just and then educated to kind of think of disease as a bad thing, like, and it's not a natural state for the body. And we should do everything we can to prevent disease and fight it. And that's how I was educated.

But then I started working with families. And as you just said, those families have issues around food. And it wasn't really about, you know, fighting disease or preventing disease, it was about the stress, and the lack of enjoyment around eating and feeding their families. And I started down that path of why, why what's going on here? What's happening? And why aren't people enjoying this experience with their kids? And why aren't the kids enjoying the experience? And growing up into eaters that feel really competent, and enjoy food?

**Christy Keating 05:53**

I mean, that concept, right? There is kind of revolutionary, because, you know, as a 50 year old woman at this point in my life, I mean, there's always been messaging around food being bad or good, or, you

know, and, and the act of enjoying it. Although we do sometimes in the moment, like, there's almost a shame around that in many ways, right?

**Julie Zivah 06:19**

Absolutely. And there is a growing movement, which I am so thrilled to see within the professional of dietetics of dietitians, really calling that out, as you know, I will not be a dietician that prescribes diets, I am an anti diet, dietitian, by definition, itself, and really trying to bring back what food means to us, you know, individually for our cultures or individually for our family. So it's really an exciting time, I think, to be raising kids. So that's my, my optimistic. Yeah, no side of it. Because I do think there are a lot of people speaking out against exactly what you're saying.

**Christy Keating 07:01**

I think you're right. And it's, it's so funny to me at the time that we're recording this, like the sort of what's going on in my own life is, as you know, we're about to embark on a trip to Italy. And all I can think of is not I shouldn't say all I can think about. I'm excited about the art and the culture. But I'm also really excited about the food. And when I contrast that to like sort of the way we talk about or treat food on a daily basis, at least here in the US, it feels really different to me. And as I said at the beginning of this, I hear a lot of parents struggling with that feeding of kids, because, like me, I think they were many of them were raised in the era of their starving children in you know, you name the part of the world, you know, the clean plate club, you can't have dessert until you finish everything, like all of these messages that I certainly heard growing up, you know, along with other far more damaging messages, like, if you eat that you will be fat. And that was like the worst thing that could happen to you. Right?

**Julie Zivah 08:10**

Absolutely. And even a lot of the recommendations around feeding children are fat phobic, they are the idea as I was talking about disease prevention, or it may be prevention of particular body size. And so I think that's problematic. And the other layer too, Christy, is now we have social media, right. So in addition to the pressure to prevent disease, there's also this imagery that parents are pressured to kind of uphold, like my child eats broccoli, and therefore I am morally more valuable than that mom over there whose child is eating Cheetos. Like we have this kind of hierarchy of our value as parents. And there's actually some research on that, that parents reflect on their own worth and value as a parent based on what their child eats. And I think it's really toxic and problematic. Because when we step back from that, you know, and look at it as a child development issue, we actually don't control what our children eat.

**Christy Keating 09:11**

That's a really profound point of work from where I'm sitting because we are really good at judging other parents. We are also really good at judging ourselves. And in part because we know we're being judged by other parents, right. And food is certainly one of those key areas and you're totally right, like I've heard it, you know, people bragging or touting the fact that their children will eat any vegetable put in

front of them. And then talking about the kid who will only eat mac and cheese which happens to be my six year olds favorite meal right now.

**Julie Zivah 09:48**

Yep. And then you bring up a couple of a couple other kind of fireworks are going off in my mind as you say that and one is what we tend to do and is kind of sold To particularly mothers, on social media, is that okay? Well, your child won't eat the vegetable, if you just do this thing, then you will get the child to eat it, if you offer it with a dip. If you offer it in a bento box, if you cut it to a shape, and the immense pressure on a parent to find a way to convince the child to eat the thing, yes, is incredible. And then we also the other layer, you know, we feel like it's our fault as parents, if our child does develop an illness, if there is a diet related issue, if our child has difficulty, even small things, like some children have difficulty swallowing. And we kind of internalize that as okay, I must do something about the thing. And you've talked about this in other contexts with parenting, right? If I do the thing, the result will be this right before I've managed the situation. And I was gonna say nine times out of 10, maybe 10 times out of 10. It doesn't work that way.

**Christy Keating 11:06**

Right? Yeah. It's one of those places where we as parents are like, I've got the plan. And if I just do it perfectly, right. Yeah. And that is messaging that I tried time and again, to combat as you said, in a variety of contexts. And I worry a little bit that I am not a dietitian, obviously, maybe some of the messaging that I what I thought was very progressive messaging around food is still we're still not there.

So I want to back up and sort of explain to listeners what I'm talking about. Or have you explained to listeners when I'm talking about is, you know, when when my older daughter was a toddler, I was taught a philosophy of eating or an approach to eating that was developed by a woman named Ellen Sattar called the Division of Responsibilities. Why don't you talk a little bit about what that is? And then we can talk about how it works well, and how it doesn't work.

**Julie Zivah 12:05**

Well. I'm so glad you brought that up, Christy because I think the Division of responsibility and feeding has kind of become the, you know, handout norm, if parents go to a pediatrician and say my kids having a problem eating is a picky eater. If parents go to perhaps even a dietician or a parent coach, there'll be handed a handout or say go to Ellen Satter's website, look up the Division of Responsibility. If you follow those steps, you will end up with an eater who does not gain weight. It is a framework that is fat phobic, it's aimed to prevent obesity. And then so parents tried to adopt this thing.

And I need to back up for just a moment just to say Ellen Sattar work is pivotal in the development of what we now know about feeding children. So when we're talking about the Division of Responsibility and feeding, my intention is not to kind of throw it all out with the bathwater, rather, to invite parents to

think critically about feeding their children and really figure out what works for them. So I am going to say some things about the Division of Responsibility that in my experience, and my conversation with other dietitians, lands in a place where it's really not honoring what it is we're trying to do with kids, which is to help them enjoy food, help them grow up into adults who you know, have a job, maybe buy the food that they want to and learn how to prepare it, and to feel good in their bodies, that that's our goal. And so I but I do want to say we are grateful we being myself, and I guess I'm speaking for the larger community for the body of research that Elon said are produced so that we could get to where we are now. I wouldn't be in conversation with you about this if I hadn't gone to a training, you know, 1520 years ago, specifically on how to implement the Division of Responsibility.

**Christy Keating 14:06**

Yes. Yeah. And I, I appreciate you saying that, you know, we can recognize the value that it's added to the overall conversation and that it's also not perfect, that there's some issues but what I loved about what you just said, is this idea that of what the big picture goal is, right to have children who know how to feed their bodies who know how to make food, you know, how to buy food, and know how to enjoy their food, right? And I don't know that we often think about that, in the moment, like as a parent when we're like, I gotta get a dinner on the table. And I'm thinking of a really kind of interesting parallel. So, you know, as you know, I do a lot of talking about how to talk to kids about sex and their bodies and all of that. And, you know, I have to credit my colleague Amy Lang for for some of this but that thinking of like, And I think you know, am I right?

**Julie Zivah 15:01**

I don't know her personally, but I have definitely relied on Amy's work to help raise my children.

**Christy Keating 15:08**

Yeah, she's doing great work in the world. And she and I become good friends. But one of the thing that one of the things that I learned from her and that she and I both teach is that we have to think about what that end goal is for our kids, right? We want them to have a healthy, loving, respectful, consensual sex life. But in the moment when we're parenting around that, we're like, oh, my god, don't have sex. Don't ever have sex, I'll kill you if you have sex. I mean, I can't tell you how many parents I hear say that. Right? Right. Um, and there's some really interesting parallels in the way that we're thinking about food because it's Oh, my God, don't eat that don't eat that you might get fat, don't eat that, when we're not thinking about that long term. That what we if we really pause and think about that long term, big picture, we want our kids to know how to feed themselves, and we want them to enjoy their food. Yes.

**Julie Zivah 15:56**

And we want to step back enough, and set some guidelines and boundaries, and really some scaffolding and some support, where they can safely navigate the things they're going to navigate. And, you know, one of the other long term things is we really want the kids to come back and talk to us when there's a problem. We've set up a loving, inviting connection so that when they are exploring something

with food, or sex, or alcohol, or whatever it might be that that we are their place of felt safety. Right. Right. I do want to hop back to the Division of Responsibility, because I feel like I didn't answer your question.

**Christy Keating 16:38**

Fantastic. And I was actually gonna say, we talked about it a little bit, but there's I'm sure many listeners that aren't, aren't familiar with what it actually is.

**Julie Zivah 16:45**

Okay, good. Yeah. Yeah, so the Division of Responsibility is a feeding framework, where the child is responsible for if they're going to eat or not, and how much they're going to eat. And the parent is responsible for where the child eats, what the child needs, and when the child eats. So parents decide what when, where, and the child decides if they're going to eat or not, and how much so it's kind of like parent provides child decides, it's important to as you're drawing these parallels between like more mature topics, some families find that this framework works really well when their kids are tiny. But then, as their kids get older, and want to have more choice, than it doesn't work so well.

**Christy Keating 17:30**

Right. So, in full confession, I think I could say that that's pretty true in my home, because this is what I was taught when my daughter was little. And I was really anxious to not give her some of the negative messaging around food that had been given to me. I wanted her to have more control and decision making. And, and, and it worked really well. And it has worked for both of my girls in many ways. But now that I have a teenager, she's like, I'm gonna get what I want when I want to. Right. And I can't control that.

**Julie Zivah 18:03**

Right, right. And you, presumably, when they're younger, we don't want to control it. Because again, we want to keep that connection strong. And, you know, if, if any framework or any topic we talked about today around feeding children. If there's anything that interrupts the connection of the parent and the child and that relationship, then my invitation to families is always it's not worth it. Always, it has to be rooted in the connection. And I think, you know, there are parts of the Division of Responsibility that work really well for parents. So one of the invitations within that structure, for example, is you decide what the child's going to eat, meaning you're going to prepare a meal, and you're going to preserve your own self. In that, right, you're not going to spend all of your time trying to figure out what everybody wants to eat. And kind of there's this idea that you're not going to be a short order cook. Right, right. So you're preserving yourself. That works for some families, but I want to kind of just flip that on its head a tiny bit for you and talk about in real life. A family like mine that have we have neurodivergent children, I can make some decisions about what food is in the house, for example. So that's how I might interpret the what, but I really give my children a lot of autonomy around what with in what's available, because you have preferences when you eat, right?

**Christy Keating** 19:40

Sure. Yeah.

**Julie Zivah** 19:42

If I said to you, are you in the mood for peaches right now? And you said, you know, I'd really rather have watermelon? How would it feel to you if I said, well, that watermelon sitting right there, but you can only have the peach. Yeah, right. And just what would be the internal message to a child and then when you take a child who's nervous Virgin has some maybe some sensitivities around things. But I would try to dictated them while you're having peaches and that peach skin, you know that fuzzy peach peel. My, one of my kids can't touch it. It feels very scary to him, almost. And he's 16 years old. So, really, but if I, you know, can talk with him and figure out how to make it feel safe, then we can navigate a peach. Yeah. But to presume as some models would suggest that I going to serve slice peaches and put it on the table, eat it if you want donate it if you don't want. Well, that was your choice.

**Christy Keating** 20:38

Yeah. I don't think I ever took that sort of hard line of rule with it. In terms of like snacks or whatever. I certainly decided what recipe I was going to cook for dinner. But you know, one of the things I talk about so much repeatedly, and is a one of the primary principles of positive discipline and one of the primary principles of body safety is mutual respect. Yes. And what you were just describing with the situation of a kid who wants a watermelon and you're like, Nope, you're having a beach, even though the watermelons are right there, that does not feel respectful to me. Now I can see if there's like a massive piece of chocolate cake and some fruit like, but I'd love to hear your take on that. You know, what do we do? Because parents are like, Why can't let my kid eat sugar all day? That's all they would eat.

**Julie Zivah** 21:33

So that's interesting. Bring that up. Because, as with most parenting, and I am also trained in positive discipline. So I am right there with you. I think that this is probably the most contentious, difficult piece of the puzzle for parents to navigate. Yeah, college, we were raised in a time where chocolate cake morally is bad.

**Christy Keating**

Uh huh.

**Julie Zivah**

Fresh fruit is good by comparison. You know, some would argue that any sugar is bad. Yeah, we get we get in these, you know, dichotomies of what's good and bad, right? But when you really challenge yourself to pull back and think, Well, what if they both have equal weight. So some, Ellen Satter's advise is, actually, on this is that you serve dessert with a meal. And if it's the dessert first, eventually, the child will kind of lose interest, and will eat it with a meal, but it really normalizes the food.

**Christy Keating**

Right.

**Julie Zivah**

Like, I can get behind that. However, I also have a child that will just eat the chocolate cake every time. Do I totally happy, and she'll be all in. And I have to decide, am I okay with that? Right. So now I will really challenge you and your audience to think for just a moment to like, take a pause and be like, what would it actually mean if a child only ate chocolate cake for dinner every night. Well, what would that mean to you? What would that say about you as a parent? What would your fear around that be?

**Christy Keating**

Yeah.

**Julie Zivah**

What does that really mean, and have we just been so conditioned to think that that would be the worst, most awful, horrible thing and our child can't thrive? And it's not, quote unquote, healthy? Or is it possible that a child who eats chocolate cake for dinner every night grows up into a fully functioning healthy adult?

**Christy Keating 23:43**

It is such a good question, because I'm finding that question very challenging to me, to be totally honest with you. Because and not from my like, moral standpoint. Again, I'm not a dietitian. But what I've been taught, rightly or wrongly, is that there is more nutritional value in a meal that is, you know, lean proteins and healthy vegetables and fresh fruit than there is in a slice of cake.

Now, I'll be honest with you, I'd probably pick the cake. Better. Right? Right. But I'm finding myself really challenged with that. And I have to imagine that some of the listeners are as well. And we're saying, Well, yeah, having no rules would be great. If again, if there were no consequences, and it strikes me that the consequences are what you've been talking about, which are that people worry about disease, and obesity. So how do we, how do we parse that out?

**Julie Zivah 24:45**

Yeah, I think that is a journey, and a process. And it is a challenge to us as parents to do our own inner work. There's a lot of conversation about re parenting or selves, we also need to repeat ourselves. We have a responsibility, I believe, to our children to make sure we've done our work around this, before we start to try to control and restrict, or force foods on our children, we really have to come to terms with as you just said, the things that we've been sold and told, and question whether or not they are actual truth. Or we have been told something for so long by the diet industry, that we have to really grapple with that. Truth is like we both have children, your child could eat chocolate cake every night for dinner, and my child could eat chocolate cake for every dinner every night. And of course, we're exaggerating



here because your child might be free of disease and have a societally accepted than body. And my child might develop some sort of illness and have a body that is less accepted currently, by society. We don't get to control what the outcome is, regardless of what our kids eat, right? So we really need to kind of sit with that, as adults who are raised in a culture of shame, blame, and the misperception that we get to control our body size, based on what we eat. We live in a healthcare system, then, and and this kind of loops around to back back to that idea that parents are responsible for what children eat. It's extremely a privilege perspective, if you have food security, that's a luxury,

**Christy Keating 26:52**

You're totally right about that. Yeah.

**Julie Zivah 26:54**

So there's that component around it. There's also the notion that the individual person is responsible for what their body looks like, how evil they are, you know, I can eat all of the things on the planet, and I am hard of hearing I wear hearing aids, there is absolutely nothing I could eat differently. To change my hearing, right? It's just not it's a genetic. It's something I inherited. But if I took that example, and said something about, you know, my body size, or even diabetes, or some other quote unquote, preventable disease, the truth is, I could spend my entire lifetime trying to eat a particular way to change something that I'm genetically predisposed to. And the outcome will be the same. And therefore, I spent my entire life trying to control something that's beyond my control. Now, my invitation to parents is to grapple with these hard questions, and there is no right answer. And some people would say, Well, what are we supposed to do? Julie, just throw all the food out there and be like, have a party kids, there are no days no limitations. And I'm not suggesting that because that also is chaotic. Yeah, but I can offer kind of a counterbalance to food rules and restrictions. And that is kind of a value based framework called Responsive Feeding.

**Christy Keating 28:33**

Okay. And I've heard of this, but I'd love to, and I think you're about to hear more what it is because I have some of those same questions that you just raised, which is, okay, so let's say I do all my own work, I grapple with, as best I can, the idea that we've been given some pretty messed up messaging around food and the level of control that we actually have, even if we can get our kids to eat what we want them to write if we can force them to eat the broccoli instead of the chocolate cake. That gives us this illusion of control that we really in reality don't have, as you just pointed out. So let's say I grapple with that I, you know, come to terms with that. As you said, it still leaves me with this question of I mean, I Yeah, the chaos of eat what you want, when you want kind of thing. That's, that feels like the flip side of this. They're not good either.

**Julie Zivah 29:35**

Right, right. Yeah. And so what I do and other dietitians that I highly respect do is we work with families to come up with a plan that's individual that works for them based on their situation. So there's really no

one size fits all. It's like with parenting books, right? Someone will pick up a parenting book and say, I'm gonna apply this plan and it should work. But it might be, see that their child doesn't respond that way or their child's sensory secrets that they really need more of the physical touch before they can regulate themselves, right?

What I appreciate about Responsive Feeding is rather than a set of rules around feeding and eating, it's an invitation to an exploration of values. And the title or the name kind of says it all, which is Responsive Feeding. So the parent offers something or my setup a situation and then is responsive to how the child interprets that. Where is the child developmentally? What are they capable of? Where can I challenge that child, but I'm responding to the child's reaction and the child's preferences. So for example, if we go back to our peach and watermelon, if both are readily available, you know, and I don't know why we do this as parents and I'm guilty as charged, but I'll be like, No, it's peach time we're eating peaches right now. It's that in the child says I'd really rather have watermelon. And the watermelons right there, if you can say, oh, okay, that works for me. It's responding to the child. What that does for the child is they then feel like, Oh, my parent heard and understood me. They got what I needed. And then I offer that to the child they have it. And then the child feels safe to really ask for what they want.

So Responsive Feeding is about responding to the child. And we talked earlier on about kind of our long term goals. And there are kind of five long term goals with Responsive Feeding or values, I guess I would call them.

And there is a lot of great research on Responsive Feeding. The teachers that I have had, including Jo Kormac and Katja Rowell, I cannot speak highly enough of them. There's also a neurodivergent-affirming model of feeding all credit to Noreen Hunani who fits really well into this knowing of your child and what what they're working with, right?

The first of those five kind of values that I encourage people to kind of reflect on with their, in their parenting is autonomy. And that kind of how do we feed a child with respect for their personal space, their bodily like integrity, and their own kind of self and their own control? I'll take a very tiny tangent and say it is common procedure right now in feeding therapies for children who are having food aversions, whatnot, to force food into a child's mouth to force the taste for some bite. But as you were just talking about consent, we really, really don't want to invite that we want to build a sense of autonomy, not compliance. Right? Right. So that's kind of the first value.

The next value is the relationship, which is an attuned connected relationship with a caring adult. As with all things parenting, we know that that is kind of the cornerstone.

And the third value we already touched on is competence. You know, what am I trying to teach my child but also when How is my child internalizing that and starting to feel like they can meet their own needs?

What are the skills they're building, and this is a lot to do with, like a great example of silverware. Babies, when they start to eat with their hands, some children develop the ability to hold the spoon and put it in their mouth. And that's their skill. Other children, my 12 year old included, really still prefer to eat with their hands. So what's the skill is the skill that I'm going to be tied to as a parent that my child eat with a utensil? Or is the skill that I'm really tied to is that my child learns to put food in their mouth in a way that's pleasant to eat with them to be at the table with them, and works for them. There are cultures where people eat with their hands all the time.

**Christy Keating** 34:07

Yeah, well, there are. And I can also hear if it's in the back of my head, I'm like, okay, so competence obviously, I'm on board. And then I'm thinking and maybe they don't do these anymore, but when I first started my professional career, there would be like business lunches, right. And can an adult go to a business lunch and eat their spaghetti with which we all know you should never eat at a business lunch anyway? Because its messy.vBut, you know, sort of from that, like social norms and manners place. What would you say to a parent who's kind of getting caught up on that piece?

**Julie Zivah** 34:51

I would say it sounds to me like the fear is that your child will grow into adulthood and not know how to you silverware at the table. Is that, does that sound, is that what I'm hearing you say?

**Christy Keating**

Yeah.

**Julie Zivah**

And now I would just invite you to think about how likely that is to actually happen. Your child will have the influence of peers, your child will be in places where they learn and observe other people using silverware. Your child will have a presumably many adults in their lives that say, Hey, did you know that when you're eating in our fancy restaurant, it's polite, do so aware? My assertion would be the more that your child feel seen and heard, and that they matter, the more likely they are to feel competent to know when to make the choice about when it's polite D with your hands, and not. Gotcha, okay. Yeah, it's when we compromise and push and say, You can't do that you can't do that. That's rude. That's awful. They don't feel seen and heard their need is not being met. And research actually shows us when we pressure children to do something around food, they do the opposite. Yes. Child more they last, when you press your child to eat less, they eat more. Right? So anytime there is a battle, and you know, that's about to take to the field, we can just pull back and choose not not to fight that. It is really, you know, if you listen to parents talk about when they send their kids off to college, right? And the kid does not know how to do laundry.

**Christy Keating**

Right.

**Julie Zivah**

What happens to that child?

**Christy Keating 36:46**

They shrink some clothes and turn them red, or pink, and then figure it out.

**Julie Zivah 36:51**

And then they eventually figure it out. And a child who has felt safe and respected will know to go to ask for help. Right? And they won't be ashamed to ask for help. Right? So I would assert that the same is true for feeding, they figure it out. What we tend to do, though, is expect a five year old or a six year old to behave as that adult would at a business luncheon when they're 32 years old.

**Christy Keating**

Right?

**Julie Zivah**

So it's not developmentally responsive.

**Christy Keating**

Right, right. Okay.

**Julie Zivah**

So let me just make sure I don't want to forget the last two.

**Christy Keating**

Yeah, we've got four and five to go. So yeah.

**Julie Zivah**

So the fourth one is intrinsic motivation, which is that kind of desire to act in a way that self driven rather than an external drive. So we can go back again to the peaches and watermelon, to encourage external motivation would be to give children some sort of choice, what do you want, right now. And then they are self driven to take care of it. Right. And another example might be, you know, if I have something in front of me, and I'm an older child, and I'm able to cut the food for myself, the intrinsic motivation might be, Oh, I'd like a smaller bite, therefore, I'm going to cut it, rather than Mama was cutting my food for me.

So the last one, the fifth one is this idea of kind of looking at the whole child, we're looking at the child in the context of their family, their community, their culture. One of my challenges that I've experienced with, for example, the Division of Responsibility, is there is the assumption that parents and children eat at the table together as a family, that we should have these family meals, and we should all sit down

and eat at the same time together. That in our society right now does not happen for a lot of families, right? Or because of our busy lifestyles, or even different cultures choose that differently. And we then feel badly and we are told that if we don't have family meals, we won't be connected with our kids and that I think it is true that kids who have family meals, there's research that shows that they tend to do better in school, right? They're less likely to have risky behavior. But what do you think it is about that family meal that it

**Christy Keating** 39:22

Because I've also read that research and you know what's happening at those meals hopefully, is connection. Right?

**Julie Zivah** 39:32

I guarantee you Christy, is not because somebody ate the broccoli. Feel bad like we pick on broccoli it is also not because someone ate the chocolate cake. Right? Right.

**Christy Keating** 39:43

I just so that the you know, broccoli, people don't get upset about this. I will say I love broccoli. I also happen to love chocolate cake.

**Julie Zivah** 39:51

Well and I would be remiss as a dietitian not to point out that great broccoli has a lot of nutrients so that every single nutrient and broccoli can be found in another food, right? So we don't have to get our children to eat any particular thing. Because it doesn't matter that as a dietitian, I can confidently say you can meet your nutrient needs other ways. Another example is we were raised on, you know, like the idea that you needed to drink so much milk a day.

**Christy Keating** 40:24

Yes,

**Julie Zivah** 40:25

And I'll let you complete the sentence. Why would we need to drink milk is to have strong

**Christy Keating**

Bones.

**Julie Zivah**

Bones. Right? Fun fact, it's not true. We're raised to do that. And you can have very strong bones without milk, can milk be a choice for some families? Absolutely. But I think we were educated, even in my graduate work over 20 years ago, it was, you know, we make sure families know they need to feed at least 16 ounces of milk to their five year old a day, and then to just grow to grow up and really look at

the research and go, Gosh, I was told that because the curriculum was built in part by the Dairy Council like.

**Christy Keating 41:07**

Yeah, that and that's where I think it gets really interesting is when we start looking at who has a stake in the messaging that we've gotten, right, because there's always somebody with a stake in this. And as you just said, like, the Dairy Council would like to sell more dairy products. So of course, we need to drink 16 ounces of milk a day, or whatever it is, you know, in the same way that the diet industry would love to promote the idea that your body is not okay.

**Julie Zivah 41:42**

And they would also like to perpetuate so many norms that are really, really harmful to our parents and our children. Not necessarily just around body size, but around the idea that food is something we need to control that we need to be mindful of our eating. And, you know, I live in the Pacific Northwest where being well and healthy is extremely trendy. And in my opinion, extremely toxic is the site this Nutritionism and this health is an idea that if you are healthy, and mindful of what you're eating, that you are somehow a better person or you've got yourself together. Yeah, right. Yeah. Someone who is eating, what we might categorize as processed food just doesn't have their life together. Yeah. Back though it does not honor who people are, there may be people who were raised with food insecurity. And food is plays a role in comfort, that calms the nervous system, so that they feel safe in our society. And that is absolutely as honoring and accepting as someone who eats a salad. Right? Right. So I think these are all super complex. And I know we've kind of been all over the place. It's not a, an easy switch to the flip, just say, I'm going to think this way. And I'm going to think this way.

**Christy Keating 43:22**

Right? Yeah, I was gonna say this isn't an overnight transformation. Because, you know, even having some information on this, you know, I am still feeling challenged by some of the invitations that you've made, because they and I, I see the value in them, but they're still so contrary to the messaging that I, you know, have ever received again and again. So, you know, obviously, this, as you said, it's a really complex topic, and we could talk forever. I would love to ask you this, and maybe we'll kind of end here, which is, for those parents who are listening to this and are intrigued and are thinking, yeah, those there is toxic messaging, and I'm tired of fighting with my child over how many more bites they're going to eat, or, you know, fighting with him over the candy bar, or whatever it is, whatever that particular battle is, and we, we all know what those battles look like and sound like right? You can walk into any restaurant in here family having those battles.

**Julie Zivah 44:29**

You can walk into my house and feel the tension in my body around that conversation. Even those of us in parent education and dietetics absolutely right.

**Christy Keating 44:39**

We still even those of us who know what to do, we still struggle. So for those parents who are saying, Okay, I'm intrigued, I'm open to learning more. What are three things that could kind of get them started on this path of Responsive Feeding and you share the five values that are underlying Responsive Feeding. But if you could sort of wrap that might be an unfair question. But if you could kind of say, Okay, here's three first steps, here's what might feel manageable to families who are finding themselves intrigued and challenge. What would those be?

**Julie Zivah 45:19**

That I, I'm glad you asked that. And the truth is Christy, we do live in a space and a mindset of okay, but I still need to know what to do. Yes. Right. Give me something tangible here that I can like work with. Right?

**Christy Keating 45:34**

Right. The philosophy is great, but I need to know what to do at 7pm. Tonight.

**Julie Zivah 45:39**

Tonight at Right? Exactly. My first invitation for parents is to ask yourself and be observant of yourself at mealtime. Of what rules Am I asserting for my children that are actually making my life a lot harder than or making my job as a parent more difficult? Where could I let go a little bit? Where could I back up? And perhaps give my child more autonomy? One example would be, am I inviting my children to put their own food on their plate? At ages six 810. They are very capable of that even at a younger age. Could I like lighten my load? So the first invitation is where am I getting wrapped up in? You know, doing so much and trying to figure it all out? And doing for my child and just making my job harder? Yeah, if we can make our jobs easier.

**Christy Keating 46:38**

That's let's do it. Yep. Right. Yeah, right. Yep.

**Julie Zivah 46:42**

And so that would be my first one. My second kind of invitation to families would be to think critically about what advice they've been given where they're getting that advice, as you mentioned, who might be behind that advice? If it did come from a well intending pediatrician, for example, who said, Follow this specific framework? Does it work for you? Is it working for you? Is it making sense to you and your children? Or is it causing more of a problem? So even though it came from a professional, or did it just come from Instagram, and you're comparing yourself against some unachievable, unattainable thing? That's not actually real? Yeah, that would be my my second step. Okay. My third step is I'm trying to pick just just three, it's really hard.

**Christy Keating 47:35**

I know, I know, I gave you a real challenge with this question.

**Julie Zivah 47:39**

My third invitation and I gonna break this one down into age groups, if that's okay, sure. If you have the opportunity, and the the ability, and the time, and the energy to read with your children, include books about food from different cultures, grabbed some, there's a list that I have a resource list, there are books at the public library, to broaden your child's idea of how people in the world eat their bubble, it will also broaden your idea of how people can eat in What does quote unquote, normal eating look like? Yes. So there are a lot of picture books. There are some young adult books, there are books for parents. And then you know, as we get older, too, we can educate ourselves through podcasts and, and whatnot, but but read with your kids about how people around the world eat, look at some pictures, maybe find YouTube, for those kids who are really into YouTube about How do children eat in Israel? How do children eat in Madagascar? What does that look like?

**Christy Keating 48:51**

Yeah, and I your normal. I love that idea. Because it strikes me that it not only supports this idea of sort of the celebration of food and enjoying what we eat, but it also creates cultural awareness and understanding. And we know that leads to more empathy and equity and all of that good stuff. So that third suggestion might be my very favorite one.

**Julie Zivah 49:19**

Oh, and it also gives us a place as parents to put on nervous energy around food.

**Christy Keating 49:24**

Yes, read books, which there's also lots of research around just the act of reading to and with your children, being beneficial and creating connection and doing all of that good stuff, you know, raising literacy, et cetera, et cetera.

**Julie Zivah 49:38**

I sneak in a number 3, 3.2

**Christy Keating 49:42**

Yesof course.

**Julie Zivah 49:44**

When you are eating with your children, be it at a table being at a picnic, be it anytime you're enjoying food with your child. I invite people to stop talking about the food. Don't talk about the food. Don't talk to your child about the calcium in the milk. Let's not make that the moment for nutrition education, especially if you have children younger than fourth grade, they they don't understand developmentally.



And I'm using that as a broad age group. But the connection between health and what they're eating, they're not developmentally readily ready for that information. So have those times when you're sitting down and eating and sharing food with your child be about connecting about your day, maybe about that cool book you read. Maybe you'll make a recipe from the book you read. But it's not about nutrition education. And it's not a time to say, Well, you didn't do your homework. It is just a time to be one more by not one less by not you've had enough. Are you hungry? Are you full? We really need to stop talking to children about the stop pressuring children by talking to them about what they're eating or not eating up a dance. Okay, I did four. I

**Christy Keating 51:01**

couldn't stop. Okay, four is great. And I don't know that might be my new favorite one. It's just being and connecting and letting them you know, decide that? How much are they going to eat? What are they going to enjoy? You know, which is a little piece of that Division of Responsibilities, but in a more responsive, judgment free way? Julie, this has been such an interesting conversation. I'm so grateful for it because it really is expanding my own thinking about this. So I know it's expanding other people's thinking about this. Where can people find you if they want to know more? I know you mentioned that you've got some handouts and stuff. Where's all the good stuff?

**Julie Zivah 51:45**

So I am not active on social media because I'm not. We're doing okay. I do have an Instagram page, but I mostly follow other people that I find fascinating. So the best place to find me is through my website, which is [zivahcoaching.com](http://zivahcoaching.com). And I should mention Christy, some of your listeners may know me as Julie Miller, that was my previous last name. I have a new last name, is Zivah. So same person. I've been around for a long time, but it's just a new name.

So if you go to [zivahcoaching.com](http://zivahcoaching.com), I've got resources there, I've got a contact page, feel free to email me. And then the other thing I do offer, once I've had a conversation with someone to make sure I'm a good fit for them, is office hours, I just starting in September, I'll open that, again. I spend the summer with my kids. It's free. People can just go join the waitlist now. And I'll email you when the office hours are open. And just once or twice a month, I jump online and anybody can come with a feeding question, a parenting question. And we just kind of gathering community and talk about what's coming up? And how am I going to manage XYZ, whatever it might be. So I'd love to have people join the conversation.

**Christy Keating 53:03**

My goodness, what an incredible offering and resource for people. So we will make sure that all of that information is also in the show notes, as well as the individuals that Julie mentioned during the show is being really instrumental in this space. Julie, thank you for this conversation. Thank you for opening my mind. Thank you for opening our listeners minds. I'm really grateful to you.

**Julie Zivah 53:27**

Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate you inviting me into a space where we can push boundaries a little bit, and really challenge ourselves to show up according to our values. So Thanks, Christy.

**Christy Keating 53:38**

I love it. Thank you. All right, podcast listeners. Is your mind totally blown? I'm so curious, are you sitting there thinking? No way I could never do this that feels way too squishy. And way too, you know, fluid with no rules? Or are you? Do you feel like your mind has been opened a little bit some new ways of thinking about food, nutrition and feeding our kids.

I'd love to hear your feedback, and sort of where this left you what you thought about this? I know it certainly challenged me. And I also found it really exciting to think about new ways to feed my kiddos and to be even more responsive to their needs and building connection with them. I hope you'll track down Julie and all her amazing resources.

And don't forget that if you are sitting there thinking man, I could really use some support on this parenting journey. I have got your back. You've probably heard me say it before and I'll say it again. I work with parents and professionals in a wide variety of contexts. For parents specifically, I do one-on-one coaching. I give parenting talks around brain and body safety to a variety of parenting organizations around the world.

And I host The Heartful Parent Academy which is the lowest cost way to get really one-on-one support. I recently had a member say it was like the handbook to parenting which she never had. So, I'd love to have you join me there in the Academy.

In the meantime, I will see you next week for another episode of The Heartful Parent Podcast. Cheers.