

Food
should always be a
pleasure



Food should always be a *pleasure*

Dr Emmi Pikler



Dr Emmi Pikler, founder of the famed Pikler Institute in Budapest had this wonderful saying, “**Food should always be a pleasure**”. There, in the residential nursery in Budapest, the children were lucky because there were *never* any fights about food.

Of course, the children in the Emmi Pikler residential nursery do not live on biscuits dunked in milo as in these photos. Babies are offered **the most nutritious food: breast milk** from the breast milk bank for their first months, and longer if they are not thriving.



Babies thrive on breast milk - but that is not all. Babies thrive on the closeness and warmth of the **embrace** when they are feeding. They thrive because they can tune into that drum-beat of Life they grew with in the womb, the heart-beat. This is the heart-beat of Love.



This **love** is the beginning of this child's love life. Without this closeness relationships will *never* be easy for a little person. Closeness and warmth **nourish the baby's soul**, and you *can* do this if you bottle feed, just as they do in the Pikler Institute.



... and *that* is not all. Breast milk nourishes the baby with the immunity that the Mother has built up in her life time. This lucky baby is building a **superior immune system**, as well as learning how to be a partner in a bonded love affair.



Then there comes a time in every baby's life when he or she needs solid food added to their diet, nutritious foods that are the building blocks for a healthy body and brain. Now is definitely the time to remember the saying:

Food should always be a pleasure.



Food should always be a pleasure.



The warmth of the embrace while enjoying a meal affords real pleasure to the baby.

Being put in a highchair means **the end** of this close mealtime pleasure for most of our babies... and we decide when that close physical nurturing will end.



At the Pikler Institute **the baby chooses** when he or she will get down from the lap and join in meals at the table. Typically, that is around 12 – 14 months.

It is the same for most babies on this planet, they live in cultures that do not have highchairs. They belong to cultures that use warm laps until the baby chooses to join the family at the table, or the mat.

Food should always be a pleasure.



Food is one of the main ways that you build trust and respect with your baby.

Every food is new to a baby, and she does not know if she likes it until she tries it.

Every baby will let you know if they **do not like** a certain food, and they will let you know when they have had **enough**.

Food should always be a pleasure.



Will you listen to what your baby is telling you? Or will you ignore what she wants and cajole and trick her into doing what you want?

Every mealtime is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your **trust** in your baby's wisdom, and to **respect** her as an equal human being.

Your response to your baby's messages to you **decides** whether your baby will end up fighting you around food ... or not.

Food should always be a pleasure.



As Dr Emmi Pikler counselled parents and staff alike: “Not one spoonful more”.

Would you like to be force-fed food you do not like, or force-fed more when you have had enough?

When you respect your child and listen to the messages she gives you, she in turn learns **respect**; and when you trust her, she learns **trust**.

Food should always be a pleasure, so not one spoonful more. Ever.

Food should always be a pleasure

That means, that just like you, **your baby will want to decide** when he or she is ready for the next mouthful. How will you set it up so your baby decides?



Hold the loaded spoon up at your baby's eye level about thirty centimetres from your baby's face. That way your baby can see that *you* are ready.

When your baby is ready for the next mouthful (he or) she will open her mouth to let you know that *she* is ready. That is elegance in action - **true partnership.**

Food should always be a pleasure.



Some foods can be eaten with fingers, but other foods will need to be pureed and eaten with a spoon.

Out of respect for your baby's digestive system, wait until your baby has four molars before you offer food that requires serious chewing.

And you can rest assured. Research shows that babies do not starve themselves to death if they are **offered** nutritious foods, and if they can choose what they eat and how much. On the contrary, they grow into connoisseurs who really appreciate their food.

Food & drink should always be a pleasure.



I haven't met any adults who prefer their water or their wine out of plastic cups. So why do we give plastic to our babies? Don't we **trust** them to learn to how to behave with a glass?

Plastic sipper cups 'tell' babies we don't trust them, and they allow babies to be clumsy instead of elegant.

Food & drink should always be a pleasure.



Not too many of us prefer to eat our meals from plastic plates either.

While some parents and grand-parents honour children by serving food on their best china, glass is equally suitable.

Glass allows the child to see the colours and the texture of the meal.
Mmmm, strawberry and apple.

Food & drink should always be a pleasure.



Before too long, around the end of the first year, the baby is wanting to dine with the family and friends around the table, or the mat. She wants to join the family in the important ritual of sharing food for the *pleasure of their company*.

It is in your hands. Work in partnership alongside your child so that *food, drink & mealtimes are always a pleasure.*





The single most important task of parents and those who care for our little ones at this time on Planet Earth is to **model peaceful partnerships**.

That means we adults will **act in partnership** with our babies and children.

Being ‘respectful partners’ will then be **effortless** for our children

because **they won’t know any other way**.

The World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond. Visit the World Health Organisation site: <http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/>

Food should always be a Pleasure
is a presentation for Parent Infant Classes by Pennie Brownlee

Please feel free to share this presentation with your family, friends and colleagues who are working for a peaceful world for our babies.

For information about the courses Pennie offers around peaceful partnerships, and her books for parents and teachers of infants and young children, “Magic Places” & “Dance with me in the Heart”: penniepost@wave.co.nz

Photos in this presentation (except pages 9 & 13) are by Pennie, of her family, and her friends at “The Nest” private kindergarten in Havelock North, NZ. Permission has been given for their use in this presentation, and also for the photos on pages 9 & 13 by Clare Caro of London UK. Please feel very free to enjoy them, but not to use them. Thank you.