



THE OKLAHOMAN



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Correct strategy helps get children to dinner table

By Chris Jones, Staff Writer

Parents who are chasing their 3-year-old through the house with a fork full of broccoli might find a way out of the food fight in a recently published book.

Donna Fish, a New York mother of three young girls, specializes in freeing people

always tell children they are the experts on their body and they know when they are hungry and when they are full. Chasing after them with bites of food is the worst thing a parent can do."

Ouch!

That probably hits home with many moms who are just trying to do the right thing.

"Parents feel a lot of pressure," Fish said of the food issues parents face with kids who eat too much or don't eat enough. She said some parents are under-involved and others are over-involved in what and when their children eat.

Despite their worries, Fish assures parents that 99 percent of children do get adequate nutrition.

Through experience, Fish has listed six types of eaters.

■ **The Food Demander** makes incessant demands for a certain food (usually sweet) or keeps demanding more food. He tends to be temperamental, intense and strong-willed as opposed to easy-going and compliant and can end up using food for emotional purposes.

■ **The Trouble Transitioner** has trouble either moving from an activity to the dinner table or has trouble stopping once he is eating.

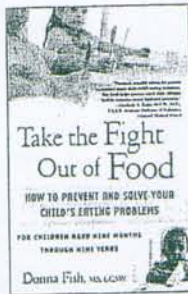
■ **The Picky Eater** finds

from a negative relationship with food. Her book, "Take the Fight Out of Food: How to Prevent and Solve Your Child's Eating Problems," takes a positive approach to food issues for parents of children ages 9 months to 9 years.

Fish, a former professional dancer, is a licensed social worker and psychotherapist with a private practice in Manhattan, specializing in eating disorders. She is an adjunct faculty member at the Columbia University School of Social Work and a guest lecturer at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in the departments of psychiatry and social work.

In a recent telephone interview, Fish said her book is user-friendly and is written with a passion to help kids and parents untangle food issues that often ruin mealtime.

"I've been treating food issues for 15 years," Fish said. "My book is based on prevention, and I try to help people reconnect with their bodies. I



Food

Continued from Page 1B

little he or she likes and keeps changing the foods the child will consent to eat.

■ **The Beige Food Eater** insists on eating foods that are white or beige colored because these foods also tend to be bland in taste.

■ **The Spurt Eater** barely eats for days and then chows down.

■ **The Grazer** loves to nibble throughout the day and avoids sitting down to a complete meal.

The book Fish wrote gives parents

tools to help them through the manipulation and into enjoyable mealtimes.

Fish said one way to prevent mealtime from dragging on to bedtime is a set time to close the kitchen. If a child says he isn't hungry at dinner time, it's OK to set the food aside for a given time and, after the time passes, the kitchen is closed.

If a child turns blue over the green beans being served, give them one option and serve the rest of the meal as prepared.

"My goal in writing this book is to free people from a negative relationship with



Donna Fish

food," Fish said. "These times are tough; parents are caught between the dilemma of worrying about rising rates of obesity and the fact that girls younger and younger are wanting to start diets, fearing that they are too fat."

Other common questions Fish addresses are how parents can know their children are eating well during school lunches; how to handle after-school snacking; and how to empower children to make the right eating choices while away from Mom and Dad.

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See FOOD, Page 3B