

# *Manual for conducting Responsive Feeding & Play Sessions*

May 2008



## **Introduction**

The aim of these sessions is to encourage mothers to be more responsive when feeding and playing with her child; a responsive mother watches for her child's behavioural signals, interprets them and responds in line with them, not against them. For example, when a child reaches for a piece of vegetable on a plate, the child's signal is saying "*I want to pick up the vegetable, it looks tasty*", a responsive mother would respond by encouraging her child to pick up the vegetable and then to eat it. When the child refuses, the mother should not ignore the child's signal of disinterest and should not force feed; a responsive mother would respond to refusals by offering a new food, pausing to talk, or showing that she likes the food.

There will 6-7 mother-child pairs in each session, the mothers will bring their child to every session except the first. It is best if the child does not eat for a couple of hours before the session starts,



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- Turning the face away from food is the child's way of saying, "I cannot eat right now; ask me why; wait or give me something else."

d. **About time for child play and mother's talk:**

It is also good for babies to play with objects and for mothers to talk to babies while they play.

**Why do babies need to play with things?** *Let mothers give answers and thank each one. Then give your answer.* The answer is almost the same as what I told you about self-feeding.

- **Motor Development:** By playing with objects, babies develop their fingers and they use their eyes to guide their fingers. This is necessary for later school work (e.g. writing & drawing) and for household tasks (e.g. tying knots, cutting, sewing, planting, chopping)
- § **Mental Development:** Children will think about how to put things together, e.g. inside, on top. They will need this when they think about numbers and letters.
- § **Development of Self Esteem & Confidence:** Children get a sense of pride and mastery from being able to do things by themselves.
- § **Keeping themselves busy:** Play of babies and children is like work for an adult. By playing, babies set themselves a small task that they try to complete. When they get older, they will set chores to complete.

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### Activity 3. Mothers play a word game

The game is called "What comes to mind?" One person says a word, any word, and the next person says the first word that comes to mind when she hears that word. I am going to start by saying a word, and then everyone should quickly say whatever the word makes them think of. Everyone will probably say something different because there are no right or wrong answers. Here is my word: NAME. Let all mothers say a word or phrase that comes to their mind when they hear your word. See how many said the same word and how many said a different word. Each word comes from their own experience. Here is another word: COOK. Here is another word: BABY. Say some funny words so players are entertained. Mothers can take turns saying the start word, and the Community Facilitator will say what word comes to her mind when she hears is.

- **If a child cries, how does a loving mother answer? There are many reasons why a child cries. How does the mother know if the child is afraid, angry, hungry, or bored?**  
*Your answer: they can ask their child or try different things such as holding, soothing, singing, feeding, talking or bouncing, to see what works.*
- **If a child refuses food, how does a loving mother answer?**  
*Your answer: they ask their children if they want to self-feed or if they want to wait a bit, or if they want to try some other food. Ignoring the child's refusal and forcing food or threatening is not a good solution. A refusal is like a cry; mothers have to listen to their child.*

**Look at this picture.** *Show the laminated picture of mother and child.*

**What is the mother doing to make the child a happy eater, healthy and intelligent?**

*Mothers should mention in any order the following. Appreciate every answer. At the end, say these:*

- 1. Mother washes her child's hands before touching food.**
- 2. Mother lets her child self-feed.**
- 3. Mother watches her child's signals and talks nicely to her child.**
- 4. Mother offers good foods like vegetables, fruit, fish and egg.**

Then Read mothers the 5 main messages on the laminated picture.

- 1. Tell children, "First you wash your hands; then you touch the food."**
- 2. Self-feed: Let your child pick up the food and eat.**
- 3. Be responsive: Watch, listen and respond in words to your child's signals.**
- 4. When a child refuses, Pause – Ask why. Do not force feed or threaten.**
- 5. Offer a variety of foods especially fish and eggs, fruit and vegetables.**

**Homework for the week:** During the week, notice what your child likes to eat and what objects your child likes to play with. Tell us now what your child likes to play with. Each mother should say something a bit different; if they repeat what other mothers said, ask, "Can you add something new?"

Tell mothers about preparing for the next session: **You must bring your baby to the next session and all other sessions. Babies should be hungry so don't feed the baby for 2 hours before the session (except breast milk). Bring a cloth or jute bag containing any play objects or learning materials that your child likes to play with. We will let the children play while we talk.**



Then the facilitator can show what is in her play bag. As she takes each out, she can pass it to a child to play with. Especially to a child who does not have many toys or who is looking bored.

Seeds, rice or beans in a bag or plastic bottle to shake (for infants under 12 months)

Sticks or Candle (to be inserted in the ground) and 1 or more bangles

6 sticks to count, make shapes, draw in the ground

Rope to attach to something to pull

Cloth to wrap around self or a piece to hide/cover an object

Picture from magazine or store product

Spoon to carry seeds

Flat stones to stack on top of one another

Small clay objects

Palm leaves or Spinning top (*latim*)

10 blocks of any shape from carpentry shop or bamboo blocks





**put it in your mouth."** *Facilitators should praise and encourage the child whenever she touches the food and brings it to his/her mouth, for example:*

*"Good baby. Eat it. It tastes good. You will like the taste. It is good for you to eat. You are good at eating food by yourself."*

If the child is reluctant to touch or eat the food, the mother can say encouraging words such as:

*"Good baby. Try to touch the pumpkin. You will like the feel of it. Look how pretty is the pumpkin. Use your fingers to hold it. Try to put it in your mouth now. You will like it. It tastes good."*

Tell mothers: **It is important to give the baby plenty of time. Do NOT hurry your child by telling him or her to eat quickly. Children refuse and choke on food if they are hurried.**

2. Mothers Practice. After you have demonstrated, ask the mothers to practice the activity by themselves with their children. **"Put the baby so you can see his or her eyes and mouth. This means on the floor facing you with the plate between (if the child can sit) or on your knee while you support the child's back with one arm and hold the plate with the other hand."** Make sure all mothers can see their child's eyes and mouth. **"Now tell your child to eat and give lots of praise and encouragement."**

3. Coach the mothers by praising them for the good words and actions. Always offer some praise to mothers. Suggest correct words and actions if you see any mistakes, such as not seeing the child's face, or not talking to the child, or mother feeding the child without letting the child touch the food. Remind mothers not to feed their child but simply to encourage the child to touch the food, watch and respond to the child. If the child persists in NOT touching the food, then the mother can model this by saying, **"Watch me. I am picking up a piece of food and putting it into my mouth. It tastes good. Now you do it."** Or mother can put food into child's hand.

Mothers should imitate the words you ult 7.tif



## SESSION 3. Self Feeding: Interpreting and responding to your child's signals

### Information for only Community Facilitators to read ahead of session

- Responsive feeding means that mothers watch and listen to their child, notice the child's signal, interpret the signal, and respond in line with the signal, not against the signal. This means that if the child wants to take a mouthful of egg, not rice, then the mother should let the child eat egg first. If the child reaches out to touch the food then the mother should encourage the child, not stop him. The mother should respond as soon as the child makes the signal. If the child is reaching for food, give the food immediately; do not wait.
- This does not mean that the mother agrees to everything her child wants, but she should say she heard the child and agrees or disagrees. If the child is being hurtful or destructive; then mother's should say "don't hit your sister" or a similar rule. If the child asks for sugar, she says, "No sugar; it is bad for you." If the child turns away from food, the mother can ask, "Why are you turning away?"
- One signal can have different meanings; it is the mother's job to interpret her child's signal and respond. Sometimes she might have to try several different responses before getting the correct one. Mothers must learn to know their children; each one is a different person.

### Objectives

By the end of the session, the mothers will have:

- Noticed appetite & satiety signals from their own child who is given food to eat
- Responded with words and actions to some of their child's signals during play and feeding

**Session Duration:** 1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes

**Materials:** Facilitator's play bag

Egg, vegetables such as sweet pumpkin or carrot chunks mixed with thick dal

Bucket of water, soap

Drinking water

Laminated Poster with messages; of baby reaching for food [or play things]

**Review of Homework (5-10 minutes):** Ask each mother what they committed to do last session and if they were able to do it or do something else. If some mothers did not do it, ask why. Talk about how they can overcome the barrier. For example, if they forgot, then ask if they can remember by asking someone to remind them. If the child was not successful at self-feeding, did the mother try again each day or give up and stop? Then ask if the mothers re

Tell your child what you see in his face and body.

Say, 'I see you are looking. Good baby.'

or 'I see you are reaching. Good baby. Take it if you want.'

or 'I see you are picking up the toy. Good baby. Do you want to play with it?'

Let mothers practice talking to their child in this way while the children play. If child plays well, then the mother should only watch and talk to the child in the 2-way style. If the child will not play, then the mother can use encouraging words such as, "There is a \_\_\_\_\_. What can you do with it? Pick it up and do something with it." or "Look how long the spoon is. Can you touch something far away with it?"

Say to mothers,

- "Signals are like words. If the child could speak, the child would be saying words such as, 'I want ...' or 'I do not want ....' Mothers cannot ignore these signals. They must interpret the meaning and respond."
- "To interpret signals means that mothers watch the child's actions and listen to the child's sounds and then figure out what the signal means."
- "To respond means that mothers directly and quickly answer the child's signal with words and by acting in line with it, not against it."

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## Discussion Activity 2: Problem Solving: *What should I do when ...?*

Q: What if my child wants to run around and doesn't want to play sitting down?

A: Children sometimes need to sit and sometimes need to run around and play. Give your children play materials when they are sitting, and more active games to play, like Hide and Seek, or running in circles, when they are feeling active.

Work out a schedule that is comfortable for you and your child, so both of you know the times when they will sit and play with objects, and the times when they will be active.

Q: I can't find a toy to add to my child's play bag every week.

A: Talk to other people and find out what play materials they give their children. Maybe your community can create a play trunk where different families can come and borrow toys.

Q: What if my child breaks the play things?

A: Play objects are meant to be played with and they sometimes do get broken. Children still need many different materials to play with. Do not keep play materials out of reach (in the cupboard).

Q: What if the older children want to take the toys to play with?

A: Let them play with the toys, and ask them to share with the younger child. That way, the younger child will learn about new ways of playing with their materials. Also, children have fun playing together.

Q: What do I do if my child doesn't do anything with the toys?

A: First, you can try bringing in another child who likes playing with the toys; your child will watch them and learn.

A: Children should play with toys at some time during the day, because it develops their fine motor skills and their thinking. They should also play running, jumping, and hopping games, because that helps them develop other skills. There is enough time in one day for both kinds of play.

Q: What if I am too busy to talk to my child?

A: All mothers are busy. Mothers need to be busy with housework and talk to their child at the same time. You can let your child talk while you listen, and respond from time to time to show that you are listening.

Q: Why do adults have to play with young children? Why can't older sisters and brothers play with them?

A: Adults don't have to play with children. However, adults do have to provide children with play materials and adult talk so children learn new words. Sisters and brothers are fun to play with, but they are children, and so cannot teach the child as much as adults can.

Then collect the toys, saying "**We are going to feed children and we do not want any toys out while feeding because toys distract children from food. Always put toys away from the place where you feed.**"

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### Practice Activity 3: Watch, Interpret & Respond to child feeding signals

(30 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is for the facilitator to model to the mothers how they should **WATCH, LISTEN, and INTERPRET** their child's hunger and satiety signals and how they should **RESPOND**.

#### 1. Demonstration by Community Facilitator

"**Now we will watch feeding signals from children.**" Pick one mother-child pair. Start off with the hand-washing routine "**First you wash your hands, then you touch the food.**" Give the food to the child on a plate. **INTERPRET** the child's signals by saying what you see and the possible meaning of the signal.

Say some of these:

*"See his head moving. See his eyes are watching the food. See his smile. His hands are moving but they don't yet reach for the food. I think this child is hungry and ready for food"*

*"Look, his mouth is open and he is looking at the carrot, but he turns his head when she offered it to him. I think this child wants to eat the carrot by himself"*

*"This baby has a plate of food in front of him but he is looking at the water. I think he wants a drink to moisten his mouth before he starts"*

The facilitator should then demonstrate how the mother can **RESP**

Say: "Let the child pick up and eat the food as soon as he/she starts to show the hunger signals. Continue to watch for signals and respond to them with words. Respond with praise."

**Stand the laminated picture while you and the mothers do the hand motions and read twice**

1. Tell children, "First you wash your hands; then you touch the food."
2. Self-feed: Let your child pick up the food and eat.
3. Be responsive: Watch, listen and respond in words to your child's signals.
4. When a child refuses,

*conducting responsive feeding and play sessions*



- a. "What do you see?" Let the child point and/or make a sound and then follow by saying the word in a 5-word sentence, "You see the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_."
- b. "Good, what else?" Let the child point to as many objects as possib



He may be distracted by something in his environment

Take a break by pausing and then re-focus his attention by saying *"Baby, now is the time for eating, you can play as soon as you have finished. Look at all the tasty food I've got for you! What would you like to try next; rice, egg or pumpkin?"*

He may want some praise, or encouragement from you.

Take a break, praise & encourage your child for all the good mouthfuls she has

- Wash children's hands, saying, *"First you wash your hands, then you eat the food."*
- Encourage self-feeding by children.
- Be responsive: watch, listen to child's signals and respond with words.
- If a child refuses, Pause and Ask Why, then try 4 or 5 strategies before waiting for 30 min.

3. Coaching Mothers. Watch mothers, praise good practices, correct poor practices. Support mothers who encounter child refusals. Remind them of strategies. Do not allow forced feeding.

**Stand the laminated picture while you and the mothers do the hand motions and read twice**

1. **Tell children, "First you wash your hands; then you touch the food."**
2. **Self-feed: Let your child pick up the food and eat.**
3. **Be responsive: Watch, listen and respond in words to your child's signals.**
4. **When a child refuses, Pause – Ask why. Do not force feed or threaten.**
5. **Offer a variety of foods especially fish and eggs, fruit and vegetables.**

Repeat together several times until the mothers have memorized the 5 messages.

Then ask if they can add a 6<sup>th</sup> message about play. It could be something like:

6. Offer a variety of play materials and talk while he/she plays.

## Session 5. Foods to feed and How to Solve Feeding Problems

**Objectives:** By the end of the session, the mothers will have:

- Watched how their child responds to a novel food
- Discussed some common difficulties that arise
- Discussed how other people in their family might react to the new feeding strategies and how they can cope with resistance.

**Session Duration:** 1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes

**Materials:** Animal products – Fish; some rice mixed with oil and egg.  
Bucket of water, soap.  
Drinking water  
Laminated picture with messages

**Review of Homework (5-10 minutes):** Ask each mother what they committed to do last session and what they did after refusals. Ask "**How can you reduce the number of refusals?**"

**Review of Messages:** "**Do you remember the 5 messages? Who remembers one? Who remembers another?**" Then say all of them together, reminding them with the hand motions.

Tell the child "*First you wash your hands; then you touch the food*".

Self-feed.


Be responsive. Watch, listen and respond to signals with words.

When a child refuses, pause and ask why. Do not force feed or threaten.

Offer a variety of foods, especially fish and eggs, fruit and vegetables.

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### Basic Information to say to Mothers

- Animal products are important. Give cooked eggs, fish or chicken to your child as often as possible and at least 3 times a week.
- The time to offer children new and different foods is from 6 months to 3 years, because after that time, their tastes become fixed and it will be more difficult to introduce new things into their diet.
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## Discussion Activity

substantial. If your child is used to eating every 1-2 hours, as they do when breastfeeding in the months after birth, then try to give larger amounts and stretch out the time gradually to 3 hours. Children should have a meal at 6 am, a snack at 9 am, then another meal at 12 noon and a snack at 3 pm, then a meal at 6 pm.

8) Can children eat while lying down?

Children should be sitting and awake while they eat. That way they can swallow properly and the food goes down. It is dangerous to let food stay in the mouth while the child sleeps.

9) Why is it bad to give children biscuits and puffed rice when they cry for food?

Children need 3 meals and 2 snacks every day. Do not wait until they cry; this will disturb you when you are in the middle of a chore. And so you give bad biscuits to stop the crying. Biscuits stop crying but they do not make children healthy. It is better if you plan ahead to have the meals and healthy snacks ready. If you feed you

## Booster Session 6.

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## **Glossary of terms used in the Manual**

Force-feed refers to pushing food into the child's mouth when the child does not voluntarily open it.

Interpreting signals means that the adult tries to understand what the child is trying to communicate by body movements, facial gestures or sounds.

Mealtime refers to the period of time starting when hands are washed prior to the meal, then the food is eaten, and ending when the plate (with or without food) is removed, and the hands and mouth are wiped clean.

Problem solving refers to finding solutions to difficulties or