The Nutritional Psychology of Childhood is a systematic account of research on the psychological aspects of nutrition in children from birth to adolescence. It deals with two major themes: the development of eating and the effects of malnutrition on the developing child. Robert Drewett discusses the developmental problems that arise with eating and food intake, including nursing and weaning in infancy, the handling of solids and the development of food choice and eating habits. Nutritional problems are considered in children born preterm or small for gestational age, or whose growth is poor, in children who are iron deficient or more generally malnourished, and in children with physical illnesses or disabilities, including phenylketonuria and cerebral palsy. The development of eating disorders and obesity are also considered. Drawing on research from both developing and industrialised countries, this book will be of interest to students, researchers and professionals in psychology, nutrition and child health.

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The Nutritional Psychology of Childhood

Robert Drewett
To J, K & L
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Preface

Feeding, like breathing, is central to our survival. I do not mean to the survival of ‘our species’ but literally to the survival of each one of us. Yet, unlike breathing, it has never been very clear to what discipline the study of feeding belongs. In respect of children it is the province of midwives and health visitors, of paediatricians and specialist nurses, of speech therapists, of dieticians and nutritionists, of child psychiatrists, of psychologists, and of others, no doubt, as well. To some extent this may reflect the rather uncertain academic position of the study of nutrition more generally. Whatever the reason, published research concerning psychological aspects of nutrition in childhood is very widely scattered, and this is, I believe, the first attempt that has been made by a single author to gather it together in one place in the form of a book. No doubt the attempt will leave a lot to be desired, but I hope that it will provide at least an initial source and a reasonably useful framework for those who need them in first approaching this area.

Tastes will differ, but speaking for myself I do not enjoy reading reviews that report findings without giving any indication of the nature or quality of the research that gave rise to them, so I have tried to say enough about the research I cite at least to give a flavour of the methodology used in it. This is, of course, a big field, and I have left out much more than I have included, as is inevitable in a book of this size.