

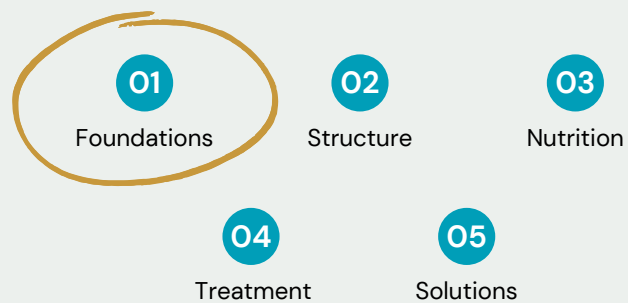


# TAKING STEPS TO OVERCOME RESTRICTIVE EATING AND TRANSFORM MEALTIMES

Presented by: The Feeding Group  
Lauren Hershfield, Occupational Therapist  
Elise Fairey, Registered Dietitian



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW



## ABOUT US

- Lauren & Elise started The Feeding Group (previously called Picky Eating Vancouver) in 2017
- Provide in-person support for families in Vancouver and virtual services across BC
- Services offered include:
  - Feeding Team (RD + OT/SLP)
  - Dietitian
  - Occupational Therapist
  - Speech Language Pathologist
- Support babies and children with various pediatric feeding issues



## ABOUT YOU

Please share with the group:

- Your name
- Age of your child/children
- One word that describes your feelings about your child's eating or mealtimes



# PICKY EATING & FEEDING DISORDERS



Feeding Matters

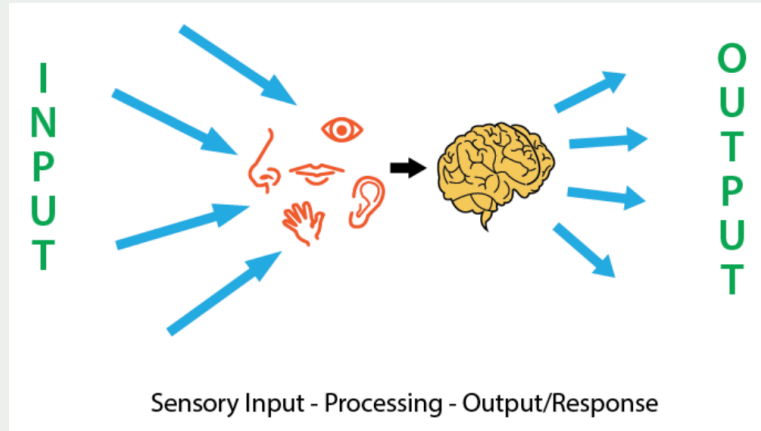
## Medical Terms

Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)  
Picky Eating  
Restrictive Eating  
Pediatric Feeding Disorders

# PICKY EATING & FEEDING DISORDERS



## SENSORY PROCESSING & FEEDING



## SENSORY PROCESSING & FEEDING

### Avoidant

- Covering nose
- Turning away
- Gagging with smells or tastes
- Avoids certain food textures, flavours or colours
- Prefers processed foods
- Supertasters





## SENSORY PROCESSING & FEEDING

### Seeking

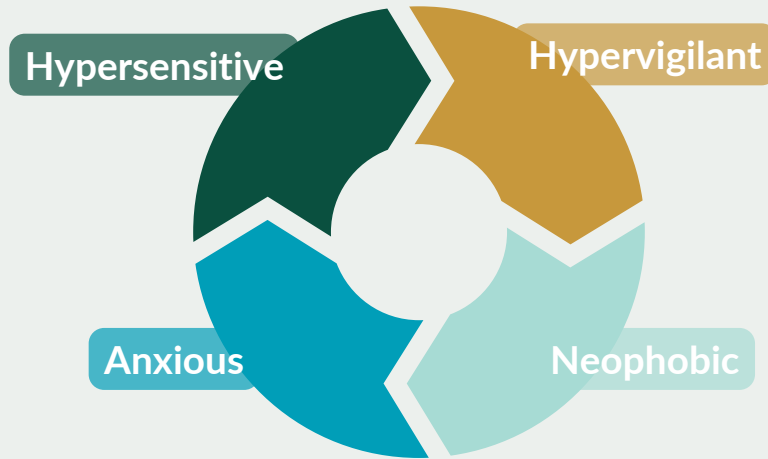
- Mouths non-food items
- Prefers strong flavours & smells
- Likes chewy foods
- Overstuffs/pockets foods



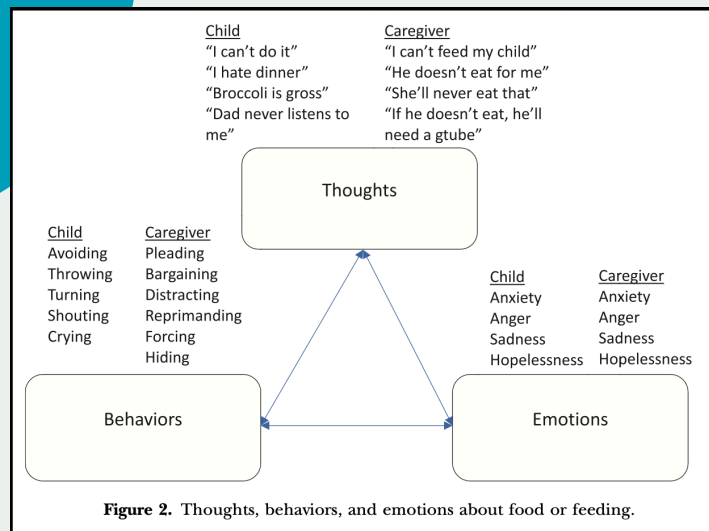
*Eating is not just a biological act but a social and emotional one too.*

Dr. Deborah MacNamara

## ANXIETY & FEEDING



## IMPACTS & FEELINGS



*We can't wholly nourish our children unless food is served in the context of connection, but what does this mean, and what does it look like?*

Dr. Deborah MacNamara

### **Autonomy**

- The child's body is respected.
- Crying, gagging, or vomiting are not 'behaviors to extinguish'. They are responses to past or current negative experiences with food or eating.
- Therapeutic goals are guided by the child's current presentation, skills, and readiness

### **Relationship**

- The connection between parent and child during feeding plays a crucial role in long-term well-being and emotional recovery.
- Heightened anxiety and tension during meals can affect the parent-child relationship beyond eating occasions.
- Lasting and beneficial transformations occur when a child experiences emotional security and a sense of well-being.

## **RESPONSIVE FEEDING**



## Internal Motivation

- Children do well with eating when they can.
- Positive meal times, regardless of the variety in diet, play a vital role in improving a child's relationship with food.
- While eating may not be enjoyable for everyone, mealtimes can become neutral or positive settings that nurture social interactions.
- Pushing for skill development beyond a child's current abilities and readiness can lead to dysregulation and impede progress.
- Anxiety in children can impact internal motivation, hunger cues, social connections, and feelings of safety.
- Sustainable, lasting changes are driven by internal motivation and desires such as hunger, enjoyment of new experiences, curiosity, and a sense of competence or mastery.

## RESPONSIVE FEEDING



## Individualized Care

- Every child is an individual with a unique history and differing needs.
- "Healthy foods" vary depending on each child's context.
- Pace and nature of progress differ from one child to the next.

## Competence

- Skill acquisition and development, which includes feeding and other motor skills, is best fostered through engaging activities in a natural setting.
- Interventions should align with the child's abilities and development stage, aiming to reflect typical development whenever feasible.
- Progress should not be solely measured by the amount of food consumed or the variety of foods accepted.
- Initial advancements like comfort, reduced anxiety, and curiosity lay the foundation for expanding food choices.
- Parents become more confident feeding partners as they witness early successes and progress.

## RESPONSIVE FEEDING



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S FEEDING



What factors do you think are contributing to your child's feeding challenges?

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S FEEDING

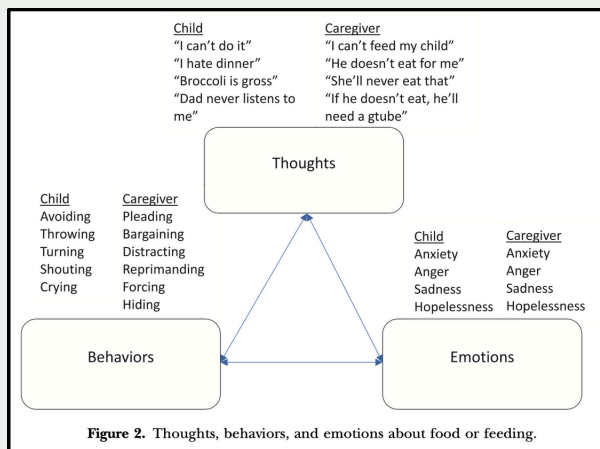


Figure 2. Thoughts, behaviors, and emotions about food or feeding.

What thoughts, behaviours & emotions do you notice in *your child* at mealtimes?

What thoughts, behaviours & emotions do you notice in *yourself* at mealtimes?

# ASSIGNMENT 1

## UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES AND OUR CHILDREN



### Mealtimes Observations

Document how your child interacts at mealtimes (over 1-2 meals this week)

- Notice if they show preferences for certain textures, colours, or flavours.
- What textures are they avoiding? Is there a pattern?
- Is there a colour or shape preference?
- Watch for nonverbal cues that indicate your child's sensory preferences.
- Are mealtimes harder at breakfast? Dinner? Weeknights? On the weekends?



### Insights and Feelings

- What are the thoughts and feelings you have at mealtime?
- How do I respond to my child? How does it make me feel?
- How do I feel after the mealtime?
- Were there any moments that felt positive in your mealtime? What did that feel like?

# ASSIGNMENT 2

## 3 DAY FOOD RECORD



We will use this food record as a base for future activities and assignments. Try to record this without pressure or judgment (on your child or yourself). It is a tool to help better understand your child's current eating habits and preferences, therefore, there's no need to change what you usually do or offer.

- Record everything your child eats and drinks for 3 days. They don't have to be consecutive, but try to include at least one weekend day and one school/daycare day if applicable.
- Include as much detail about the food, especially if your child is particular about it, for example: brand, shape, flavour, colour, preparation method.
- Provide a rough estimate of the quantity that your child eats, for example: a bite, 1 slice, 3 pieces, ~1/2 cup.
- Include details about the mealtime such as WHEN, WHERE, with WHO, HOW LONG, and WHAT ELSE is going on (distractions, big family dinner).