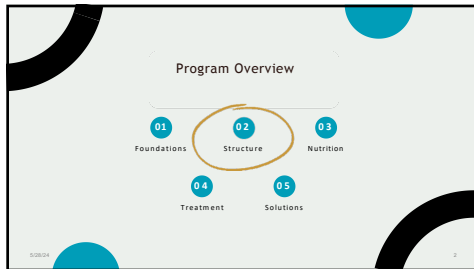


THE FEEDING GROUP act Autism Community Training

TAKING STEPS TO OVERCOME
RESTRICTIVE EATING AND
TRANSFORM MEALTIMES

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

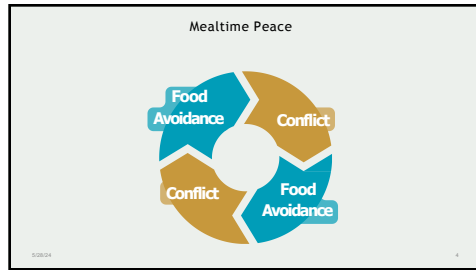
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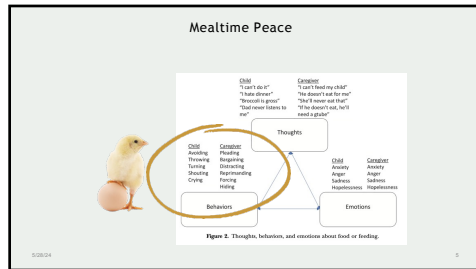
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“
They see these growth charts... But
what they can't see... How much effort
it takes from the child and the parents,
what it is you sacrifice to get there.
”

3



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Take a step back and consider what would it take to have a peaceful mealtime for your family? What would it look like?

6







- Regular Meals & Snacks**
 Offer regular meals and snacks spaced every 2-4 hours apart. By offering meals or snacks frequently throughout the day, you can feel reassured that even if they eat very little at one time, there will be another opportunity soon.
- Routine**
 Kids thrive when they know what to expect next. How we do this depends on their age and developmental stage.
 - Visual schedule, similar routine before eating, transition activities from play or screen time
 - Sensory activities, transition warning, advanced notice

Routine & structure



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Mealtime Routine

<p>1  5 Minutes</p>	<p>2  Wash Hands</p>
<p>3  Sit at Table</p>	<p>4  Eating Time</p>
<p>5  Clean Up</p>	<p>6  All done</p>

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- Expectations**
 Set clear roles and expectations for the child.
 - Examples: setting the table, clearing dishes, loading dishwasher, serving the food, phones or distractions.
 - Consider a Sunday night meeting where you give a role for the week to each child.
 - Can be written out in clear view to reference back to and review.
- Kitchen Closed**
 Avoid offering food or drinks, besides water, between meals and snacks. This helps them build connection with their hunger and fullness cues.
 - Consider a visual as a reminder


Routine & structure



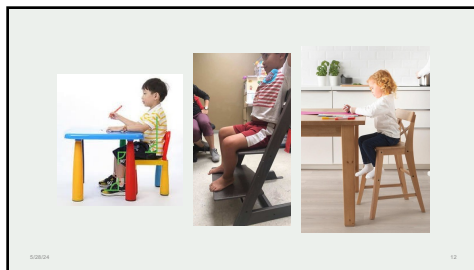
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Seating They need to have foot support and back support to feel grounded and stable.<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use a box or stool to ground their feet● Consider using a junior chair or adjustable highchair for toddlers● Length of Mealtimes Duration of meals can impact the feeding dynamics.<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Minimum: 12 minutes per age● Maximum: ~30 minutes● When your child is fidgety - channeling this energy in pre-meal activities or providing acceptable outlets can be helpful● Eating Together As parents, you play a big role in shaping your child's attitudes and behaviours around food and eating.<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Have at least one parent eat with them at least once per day	<p>Mealttime Environment</p> 
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Distractions
Distractions can be helpful at times to allow for peaceful meals and may get your child to eat more. However, distractions can also be challenging for children to interact with the foods, learn about the foods and take steps to learn about their body cues of hunger and fullness.

Strategies to remove distractions:

- Remove distractions at the start of each meal, gradually increasing the distraction-free time
- Remove distractions completely at one meal per day

Mealttime Environment




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Division of Responsibility
Parents are in charge of what food is offered, the time it's served, and where eating happens. Your child is in charge of how much they eat of what you offer, or whether they eat at all.

Shift the Focus
Intentionally create moments that foster playfulness and connection that shift the focus away from what or how much is being eaten.


- Music, funny utensils, storytelling, silly names, trivia

Mealttime Environment



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MAD LIBS JUNIOR



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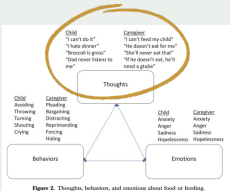
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Mealttime Environment



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GROWTH MINDSET



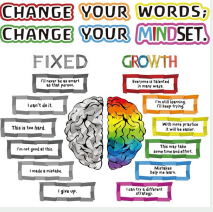
So how can we change our thoughts?

By changing the words we say

17

GROWTH MINDSET

CHANGE YOUR WORDS; CHANGE YOUR MINDSET.




18

GROWTH MINDSET

By changing the language we use at mealtimes, we can help foster curiosity and a growth mindset in our child.


- You *can* take a bite and spit it out.
- You *can* try some when you're ready.
- You *can* move it off your plate with your napkin.
- You tried the broccoli and you don't like it yet.
- You are not ready for the meatball to be on your plate yet.
- I wonder if it tastes the same as it smells?
- I wonder what it would be like if we cut it into smaller pieces?
- I wonder what it would be like if we mixed it with...



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Discussion & Reflections



What would mealtime peace look like for your family? What would be different than it is now?

Tell us how you felt after last week's homework? Did you notice anything you want to share with the group? Any "aha" moments?

Were the positive moments from last week's homework related to mealtime peace or what/how much your child ate or tried?

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Assignment 1

Taking STEPS TOWARDS YOUR IDEAL MEALTIME

Ideal Mealtime

What does an ideal mealtime look like for your family?

- Where would you be sitting?
- Who would be there?
- What would you be talking about?
- What would you be eating?

Individual Goals

Choose 1-2 **behavior** and **attitude** goals to work on this week that relate to the topics covered this week.


- Routine, schedule, structure, seating, eating together, length of mealtimes, distractions, shifting the focus, language at meals

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Assignment 2 Finish 3

Day Food Record

 We will use this food record for activities and assignments next week, so please make sure you have it completed by then.

Look back at Week 1 for detailed instructions.

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