

THE FEEDING GROUP
act Autism Community Training

TAKING STEPS TO OVERCOME RESTRICTIVE EATING AND TRANSFORM MEALTIMES

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STEPS TO EATING

EATING

- Hold and position object using independently
- Chew, swallow whole foods with drink
- Chew, swallow solids and liquids with
- Bring object to mouth for "open" & light cut
- Bring object to mouth for "closed" & light cut
- Use appropriate
- Use appropriate
- Use appropriate

TASTE

- Tip of tongue
- Side
- Tip
- Inner, undermouth roof
- Inner, cheek
- Tip of head
- Inner, neck
- Inner, shoulder
- Inner, head
- Inner, forearm
- Inner, hand

TOUCH

- Bring object into view
- Use appropriate
- Use appropriate
- Use appropriate

SMELLS

- Use appropriate
- Use appropriate
- Use appropriate


INTERACTS WITH

- Bring to the table with the food just outside of child's space
- Bring to the table with the food very close to the table
- Bring to the table with the food on the other side of the table
- Bring to the table with

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- **Finger Licks**
 - With a finger taste, your child can touch the food with his finger and then lick his finger.
 - When the food is more dry this is an easier activity, but becomes more difficult with wet foods (ie. sauces, stews, soups).
- **Snake vs Puppy Licks**
 - These are two fun ways of licking a food. The snake taste lets your tongue quickly touch the food for a small taste whereas the puppy taste runs your tongue along the food for a bigger taste.
- **Lick the Dip**
 - Do a dip tasting - put several dips out there and use a focus food to dip and then lick the dressings off and lick the food too.


Tasting
Strategies



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- **Bite & Spit**
 - Bite off a piece of the food and quickly spit it into an empty bowl.
 - Have a contest to see who can bite and spit the most pieces into the bowl in 1 minute.
- **Count the Chews/Pieces**
 - Take a bite of a harder or more chewy food (ie. apple slice, pepperoni stick, chicken breast) and the food a certain number of times before spitting it onto their plate. Decide on and count the number of chews together.
 - Have a contest to see who can make the most pieces after chewing and spitting the food onto a plate.
- **Spit Napkin/Bowl**
 - For older kids less interested in engaging in playing the chewing/spitting games. Offer them a paper napkin or small bowl to spit food into while they're still learning about the food.


Tasting
Strategies



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- **Animal Bites**
 - Using animals as a guide to how to achieve small or big bites as a form of exposure. Examples:
 - Mouse nibbles: a tiny bite and chew it by using just their front teeth
 - Lion bites: a big bite and chew it by using their back teeth
- **Wake Up**
 - Pretend to be asleep. While you're "asleep" have your child bite a crunchy food with their back teeth. Act like the loud crunch startled and woke you.
- **Down the Slide**
 - Pretend the food is playing at the playground on your plate - jumping up and down, swinging on the swings, riding the carousel around the plate.
 - Then pretend the food wants to go down the biggest slide from their mouth into their stomach.


Tasting
Strategies



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Tasting Strategies

- **Fade It In**
 - Put a tiny little piece of a non-preferred food in a big bite of a preferred food.
 - Gradually increase the size/quantity of the non-preferred food.
- **Dips**
 - Dips are a great way to lessen the input of a non-preferred food. Let go of your expectations of flavour combinations and let them be creative and explore.
 - It's okay if initially they're only eating the preferred dip off of the non-preferred food.
- **Sprinkles**
 - Smash or chop up a preferred dry food item into small crumbs. Then sprinkle them on a non-preferred food or use it in combination with a preferred dip.



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Motivation

For many children who are not intrinsically motivated, we need to look at ways to help them try new foods.

1. Reward system
 - a. Star chart
 - b. Point system
 - c. Food trial chart
2. Asking their input
 - a. What foods do your friends eat in school?
 - b. Are you curious to learn about how a food is grown? Where it is grown? What culture eats it?
 - c. Are there any foods you wished you could eat?




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NEW FOOD TRACKER

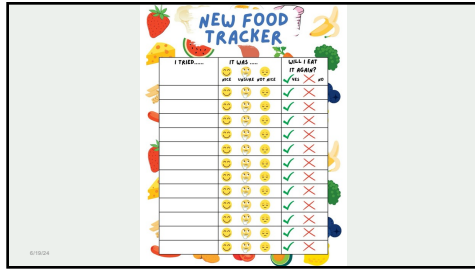
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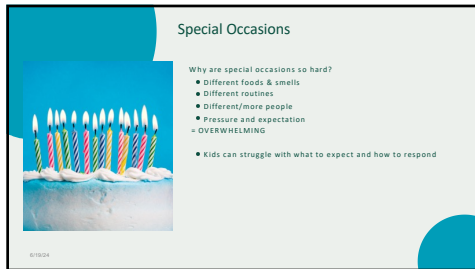
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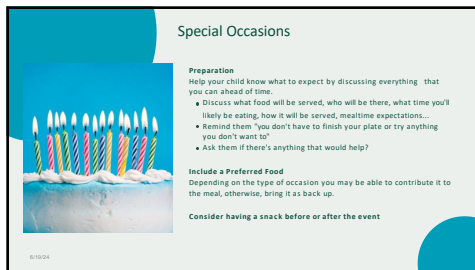
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Special Occasions

Suggested Scripts (Parent/Caregiver to Child):


- "You don't have to eat anything you don't want to."
- "We will find something you can eat."
- "I called ahead, and they are having cake and ice cream and pizza."
- "We'll bring the chips and salsa to the party, so we can enjoy the chips and see what else they have. I can't believe Marco is *!!already!!*"
- "We'll have a snack at home after the party. I wonder if they will have a Pinata again?"
- "Susie's mom is serving pretzels and pizza (*pretzels are a preferred food*). I wonder what color the Bouncy Castle will be?"

Teach them to say: "No thank you, my mom says I don't have to eat anything I don't want to."

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Special Occasions



Lower your expectations and consider what will comfort your child

Prepare for unsolicited feedback

- Consider having a conversation ahead of time to try to prevent it
- Practice scripts

Do NOT compare your child to others

Reassure yourself

Remember what they do or do not eat at the meal doesn't make or break anything. Your child is doing their best and you are helping them as best as you can.

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Special Occasions


Suggested Scripts (Parent/Caregiver to Well-Intentioned Family/Friend):

- "We've tried so many tricks that didn't help. We feel like we are on a good path now."
- "Mom, we are trying something with Susie and her eating. She is expected to be polite and participate, but we are allowing her to choose what foods and how much she will eat from what is on the table. Please don't ask her to eat more, and also, don't make a fuss or praise if she does eat something new. I know it's not how you would handle it, but I hope you can just follow our lead."
- "I'd rather not focus on weight/food, but I'd love to hear about _____"
- "I know we asked you to have Susie eat her main meal before she could have her dessert, and we appreciate your efforts, but we've learned that it probably made things worse."
- If others suggest your child shouldn't have dessert until he's finished his meal: "He's doing fine. He can have his dessert now."

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School & Daycare



- Consider the eating environment
 - What else is going on?
 - What smells are there?
 - Sounds?
 - What are other kids eating around them?
- What is happening before or after the meals?
 - Is playtime right after and the kids want to run off?
 - Struggling to transition to meals?
- Are we offering foods too challenging at school?
 - Can we take a step back and rethink lunch?
 - Consider convenience and packaging

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School & Daycare



- Timing of meals and snacks?
 - Length of mealtimes at school?
 - Too short for slow eaters?
 - Too long for grazers?
- Ask them what makes it difficult? How could you make it easier for them?

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Desserts



What NOT to do:


- Avoid using as a bargaining/bribing tool or as a reward
- Overly restrict desserts

These strategies can:

- decrease their preference for the other food
- increase desire for desserts
- promote an emotional relationship with food
- increase picky eating tendencies

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Desserts



What to do instead:

- Choose a frequency that you're comfortable with (not on demand) - ie. once a day, a few times per week, on weekends
- Decide on an approach of how/when to serve - ie. with the meal, after the meal (without contingencies)
- Usually offer a predetermined portion, but from time to time consider offering 'bottomless'
- Expand definition of dessert - ie. a single piece of candy, fruit, hot chocolate, yogurt with sprinkles...

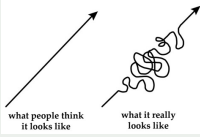
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Reframing Progress

Progress is NOT linear

SUCCESS **SUCCESS**



what people think it looks like what it really looks like

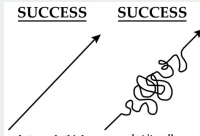
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Reframing Progress

- Progress is NOT linear
- Progress might look like...
 - Increasing interaction
 - Mindset changes
 - Meals less stressful
 - Decreased rigidity
 - Increasing variety

SUCCESS **SUCCESS**



what people think it looks like what it really looks like

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Questions



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Discussion & Reflections



What special occasions have been challenging for your child with picky eating? Do you get unsolicited feedback or opinions from family/friends? How do you manage this?

What do you observe with your child's eating at daycare or school?

Thinking back over the past 5 weeks:

- What's something you learned?
- Have you noticed any progress?
- Have you noticed any change in your thoughts or emotions towards your child's eating?

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Assignments

Tasting and school/occasions

Tasting

- Pick 1-2 tasting activities you think you could do at home with your child
- How would you adapt it for your own child's developmental stage as well as your lifestyle and routine?
- Make sure to choose foods that they're comfortably looking/smelling/touching. You might not be ready to start these strategies yet and that's okay.

School/Daycare or Special Occasions

- Consider which environment feels more challenging for your child or if you have something in particular coming up that you want to prepare for (for example: summer camp)
- Think through some specific strategies that you could use to make your child feel more comfortable or to set them up for more success in that environment
- Talk to your child about it and practice scripts (if needed)

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