Picky Eaters vs. Problem Feeders

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Introduction

• Ellen Hemrick, MS CCC-SLP, Building Blocks, Inc.
• Brief Overview of Purpose
  – Explore concepts of good nutrition
  – What are picky eaters vs. problem feeders?
  – Provide a brief overview of the developmental basis of inflexible thinking
  – Introduce the concepts of food chaining including examples
What is Healthy Eating?

- What does this mean to you?

What is good nutrition?

1. *Food vs. non-food*
   - what does sugar look like on a label?
   - the real meaning of ‘enriched’
   - additives and the havoc they wreak
   - Natural flavors
What is good nutrition?

2. *The deal-breaker nutrients*
   - fat
   - Vitamins
   - minerals

What is good nutrition?

3. *Employ good – better – best approach*
4. The health beyond nutrition

-Sometimes your child making a mediocre choice is better than you making an excellent food choice
-Food related activity is therapeutic – shopping, preparing, discovering safe kitchen tools, gardening
- Food related tasks: Older children can be tasked with meeting label goals when choosing packaged snacks they would like to eat.
Inflexible Thinking

- Hate avocado?
- Other Examples?

Development of Dynamic Intelligence

- Scientists including Peter Hobson (“Cradle of Thought” 2002) Michael Tomasello, and Lev Vygotsky talk about the development of self through social interactions with others including caregivers
- Peter Hobson (“Cradle of Thought” 2002) Origins of Consciousness
- Joint attention- Peter Mundy;
- Social Referencing: 12 months- Visual Cliff Studies
- If the brain differences cause this aspect of development to stall, children take a different developmental path.
The other path...

- Avoiding dynamic environments
- Limited motivation to face new challenges and find opportunities for cognitive growth
- Choosing not to leave situations of high predictability for situations of greater potential growth and development
- Substituting accumulation of information for wisdom and more sophisticated analysis
- Developing a generalized aversion to change and uncertainty

What does this look like?
Examples of Inflexibility...

- Must wear this, but not that...
- Must wear nothing instead of something...
- Must not get a haircut
- Must not stop watching favorite movie even if we’ve already seen it 5 times in a row.
- Must eat this, but not this....
- Other examples?
The good news? Brains can change!

- Brains can change based on what we do with them.
- So we can increase flexibility in brains no matter what a person’s age is.
- But...we’ll need to do it slowly and systematically.

Picky Eaters vs. Problem Feeders

**Picky Eaters**
- Eats less than 30 foods
- Foods lost due to “burn out” because of a food jag are usually regained after a two week break
- Tolerates new foods on plate and usually can touch or taste a new food (even if reluctantly)
- Eats at least 1 item from all texture groups
- Will add new foods to repertoire in 15-25 steps.

**Problem Feeders**
- Eats less than 20 foods
- Foods lost due to food jags are not re-acquired
- Cries and “falls apart” when presented with a new food.
- Refuses entire categories of food textures.
- Adds new foods in more than 25 steps.

Chart courtesy of Kay Toomey
**Assessment**

- Licensed SLP’s and OT’s can be of assistance in cases of problem feeders
- Assessment should include extensive case history to determine if other medical issues are present such as GERD, dysphagia, digestive issues, sensory processing challenges, etc.
- Assessment should include an extensive look at the current diet to determine:
  - Preferred Textures
  - Preferred Tastes
  - Foods from each food group child currently eats
  - Habits (seating, distractions, family dynamics)
  - Current nutritional profile

**Food Chaining**

- From the book “Food Chaining” from Cheri Fraker, CCC-SLP et al.
- A technique designed to expand the variety of foods in a child’s diet by using small incremental steps to “chain” one food to another.
This is not a baby step....

Adapt- Eating Hierarchy

- See
- Smell
- Touch
- Teeth
- Taste
- Accepts foods into diet rotation

Frankie

Our chains so far....

Baseline Food: Potato Chips, Doritos, etc. (also eating veg. soup)
Long term goal: Fruits and vegetables
Chips/Crackers/Crunchy snacks
New/Different crunchy snacks
Variety of crackers
Acceptable cracker with coconut spread topping
Various toppings including chocolate spread, apple butter
Chocolate pudding
Various chocolate puddings
Healthy Chocolate pudding
Pirate’s Booty

Smart Puffs
365 White Cheddar Popcorn

Pop Chips
Natura Plantain Chips
Frankie trying plain crackers
A little spread…

Yummm!
Onion Dip

Frankie trying cracker and onion dip! Yum!
Today, Frankie didn’t like the hummus.

Maybe we’ll try it again another day.
Choco Dream

Choco Dream on sweet cracker
A bigger piece!

A new kind of cracker- with pepper
Cheddar Cracker Chips

Cheddar Cracker chip
01/18/2012 Crackers with Coconut Spread

01/18/2012
More crackers with spread
01/18/2012
Choco-spread on a sweet Cracker

01/18/2012
Onion Dip on a cracker
01/18/2012
Frankie cuts the onion dip cracker

Frankie likes the onion dip
Frankie eats the cracker with onion dip

Frankie will eat Choco Dream at home with Mom
01/30/2012 Almond Butter

Almond Butter on cracker
Jam

Jam on cracker
Rice Crackers

Choco Dream on rice cracker
02/06/2012

Rice cracker with coconut
Rice cracker with fruit spread
Healthy Ritz cracker with almond butter and fruit spread
Healthy Ritz cracker with almond butter and chocolate dream.
Almond butter is sent home for home practice - Mother says that Frankie removes almond butter before eating cracker.

02/13/2012

We tried Hummus on crackers
Frankie tasting the Hummus

We might try these in the future…
apple butter
Mango butter

Banana soft serve
03 12 2012  Today we put apple butter in a cup and ate it with a spoon

Frankie ate about ½ cup!
Soy Based Chocolate Pudding

Avocado Based Chocolate Pudding
Ricotta Based Chocolate Pudding

In the mean time...

- Consider using purees as a method of getting nutrients to your child- Possibilities include veggie soups (with purees), fruit and/or veggie smoothies, hiding greens
Tips and Tasting

- Consider Food Diaries with pictures
- Involve the child in food preparation
- Experience the food while preparing by smelling, touching, sharing opinions etc.
- Model a language of how we can communicate about our food, including facial expressions, vocalizations, and spoken language ("I don’t like this with appropriate (or emphasized) facial expressions. This will help a child recognize that their opinions are valid, and also help them recognize that they don’t HAVE to like everything.
- When introducing new foods, an entire portion, may look overwhelming, but a small bite, may look tolerable.

More tips

- Food chains can’t be completely mapped out ahead of time, because the final route will ultimately depend on how your child responds to each of the chains.
- Sometimes foods need to be presented up to 20-30 times before it becomes a part of a child’s diet- Don’t give up!
- Used shaped cookie cutters that the child chooses for making cookies and crackers
- Soak dates and/or raisins overnight and reduce down the liquid-jar and keep for use as a substitute for sweetener or add to shredded coconut and use as a substitute for granulated sugar
Yonanas!

Green smoothies!
**TASTE!!**

*For the texture conscious: purees*

*For the sweet conscious: alternatives to added sugar*

*For the crunch lovers: nuts, the right crackers and cookies*

*For the not color-blind: green food that doesn’t look green*

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**Tips for texture**

- Puree, puree, puree
- If don’t like “slimy” tried freeze dried fruit or fruit infused water to get flavors
- Try toasting soft foods to make them crunchy
- Try dampening crunchy foods to make them soft
- Try sandwiching soft foods between crunchy foods
- Refrigerating or freezing some fruits, vegetables, spreads, or yogurts can make them palatable.
- Cooking foods can soften them but also reduces their nutrition, so don’t overcook!
**Food Chaining Exercise**

**Food Chaining**

**Current Food:**

1st Baby Step

2nd Baby Step

3rd Baby Step

**Long Term Goals:**

**Closing Thoughts**

- Your child will know when you are anxious! Play it cool!
- You are the parent/therapist! Stay in control and don’t back down on rules you have set.
- There are many, many, things that are healthy and nutritious to eat. You WILL find some to share with your child.
- Don’t put “too much on your own plate” – take baby steps yourself!
- Make mealtimes fun and relaxing – even if other things have to wait. Healthy eating is more important than most other things!
Reference List

- Peter Hobson- Cradle of Thought, 2004
- Visual Cliff Studies- Joseph Campos; Youtube clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6cqNhHrMJA
- Kay Toomey, PhD Google: “The SOS Approach to Feeding” - Workshop for professionals

More Resources

- DrFuhrman.com
- SneakyChef.com
- Bob's Red Mill Flours and mixes
- Fruit infused water recipes: http://www.buzzfeed.com/melissaharrison/fruit-infused-waters#1fyz8yf
- Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Abby's Health and Nutrition