

Activity: Picky Eating Facilitator's Guide

Target Audience:

- Parents of babies, toddlers, or preschoolers

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Laptop (to play video: He's such a picky eater eater)
http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/feeding/fortrainers/vid_holder_mp4.asp?vid=PickyEater&vid=31455337
- Scenario cards. The scenario cards are located at the end of the facilitator's guide. Print one copy of the cards single sided then cut out each question and corresponding answer and laminate them front to back. The questions are on the left and the answers are on the right. Cards will be different shapes. There are 5 scenarios.

Handouts:

[Helping Your Toddler Eat Well](#) Print this handout from the link and make copies for participants.

Background information

Most babies, toddlers and preschoolers are cautious around new foods. It can take 20 or more exposures to new foods before accepting them. Babies and children learn to accept foods faster and become competent eaters when they are not pressured to eat.

Meal time is more pleasant and children become more competent eaters when parents and caregivers follow the division of responsibility in feeding. The division of responsibility is when parents do their jobs with feeding and children are trusted to do theirs.

Parent's jobs: Offer food at regular times, decide what foods are available to choose from at each meal or snack time, and serve food without any expectations (no pressure to eat).

Children's jobs: Decide how much to eat from the choices available to them and behave appropriately.

In advance of the event, the facilitator can read more about the division of responsibility in feeding here: <http://ellynsatterinstitute.org/dor/divisionofresponsibilityinfeeding.php>

ACTIVITY A: He's Such a Picky Eater Video and Discussion

1. Play the video from this link:
http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/feeding/fortrainers/vid_holder_mp4.asp?vid=PickyEater&vidid=31455337
2. Discuss what the message is in the video: *It does not feel good to be pressured to eat. Pressure makes you eat less, not more.*

Ask the group: "How could the 'adults' in this video have treated the 'boy' in a more supportive way as he struggled with a meal he didn't like very much?"

Suggestions to add if not covered by parents:

- Focus dinner time discussion on things other than food! Keep meal time pleasant. Just offer the food, let child decide what and how much from what is served.
- Let the boy serve himself so that he can control the amount of sauce on his plate and whether he chooses the sauce.
- Allow the boy to have the sauce on the side.
- Allow the boy to have access to all of the foods such as bread and dessert like everyone else (he doesn't need to be punished or bribed because he doesn't like the sauce.

Offer these other tips for parents:

- Look at mealtimes as a learning process rather than a time you need to get healthy food into your child (support your child in the same way you would support their efforts to walk, talk or ride a bike)
- Offer a food in a variety of different ways (e.g. peas – try cooked, frozen, in soup, in a casserole, or in the pod. Change it up!)
- Teach your child how to use a napkin (Swallowing a food is often more difficult than tasting it! Children need to learn how to politely manage food they don't want to swallow after tasting it.)

ACTIVITY B: Scenario Cards

Have a parent volunteer draw a scenario card from the pile and read it out to the group. Allow discussion before sharing the suggested response on the card. Do as many scenario cards as time allows.

- a) **Scenario 1: Your child says that the meatloaf you've made for supper looks gross and he won't eat it. How can you handle this situation?**

Suggestion: "It's not nice to say mean things about the food I have prepared. Next time you don't care to have something I've prepared you can say, 'No thank you'. There are other foods on the table for you to choose from".

b) Scenario 2: Your 3 year old child is misbehaving at the table and refuses to sit in her chair.

Suggestion: Tell her that her meal will be over if she can't sit down and eat calmly. There will be nothing but water for her until snack time. Follow through.

c) Scenario 3: Your child doesn't want to finish her dinner and says that she's full. She's only eaten a few bites.

Suggestion: Ask that she stay at the table and keep you company since everyone else is still eating. Remind her that it's a long time until snack time.

d) Scenario 4: Your children always want dessert even though they rarely finish their meal. Should you give it?

Suggestion: Avoid making your children finish their meal to get dessert. This can cause them to overeat twice - once when they finish their meal when they're already full, and again when they eat the dessert. If you regularly serve dessert, serve something with nutritional value such as canned fruit, fruit crisp, or milk pudding. Allow only one small serving. Ellyn Satter suggests putting out one small serving of dessert with the meal – with the thought that if children come to the table hungry, they will go on to eat their dinner, even if they ate their dessert first.

e) Scenario 5: You want to try a new recipe for supper, but you're afraid your children won't eat it? Should you make some hot dogs just in case?

Suggestion: Serve the same meal to the whole family. Include some foods such as rice or bread and a vegetable that you know your children like.

Offer the new item in a neutral way without pressure: "Today I made curried chicken –It tastes spicy. See what you think..." Don't make a big deal if they don't like it or won't try it. You can say, "That's okay, maybe next time you will be ready to taste it".

They'll be more likely to try it another time if you don't pressure them. It can take 15-20 exposures to a new food before a child learns to like it. When you cook a separate meal for your children, it gives them the message that you don't have confidence in their ability to learn to like new foods.

Have napkins on the table so that if your child is ready to taste the food, they can politely cop out of swallowing it! Napkins **may** help cautious children with tasting foods as they don't have to worry about what to do if they don't like it (but don't use the napkin as a form of pressure to taste!)

Scenario 1:

Your child says that the meatloaf you've made for supper looks gross and he won't eat it. How can you handle this situation?



Suggestion: You can say, "It's not nice to say mean things about the food I have prepared. Next time you don't care to have something I've prepared you can say, 'No thank you'. There are other foods on the table for you to choose from".

Scenario 2:

Your 3 year old child is misbehaving at the table and refuses to sit in her chair. What do you do?



Suggestion: Tell her that her meal will be over if she can't sit down and eat calmly. There will be nothing but water for her until snack time. Follow through.

Scenario 3:

Your child doesn't want to finish her dinner and says that she's full. She's only eaten a few bites. Should you make her eat more?



Suggestion: Ask that she stay at the table and keep you company since everyone else is still eating. Remind her that it's a long time until snack time.

Scenario 4:

Your children always want dessert even though they rarely finish their meal. Should you give it?



Suggestion:

- Avoid making your children finish their meal to get dessert. This can cause them to overeat twice - once when they finish their meal when they're already full, and again when they eat the dessert.
- If you regularly serve dessert, serve something with nutritional value such as canned fruit, fruit crisp, or milk pudding. Allow only one small serving.
- Ellyn Satter suggests putting out one small serving of dessert alongside the meal – with the thought that if children come to the table hungry, they will go on to eat their dinner, even if they ate their dessert first.

Scenario 5:

You want to try a new recipe for supper, but you're afraid your children won't eat it? Should you make some hot dogs just in case?



Suggestion:

- Serve the same meal to the whole family. Include some foods such as rice or bread and a vegetable that you know your children like.
- When you cook a separate meal for your children, it gives them the message that you don't have confidence in their ability to learn to like new foods.
- Your child will be more likely to try it another time if you don't pressure them.
- It can take 15-20 exposures to a new food before a child learns to like it.

What you can say to offer food without pressure:

"Today I made curried chicken – children in India eat their chicken this way. It tastes spicy. See what you think..."

Don't make a big deal if they don't like it or won't try it.

You can say, *"That's okay, you'll be braver another day"* or *"you may like this when you're bigger"*.

- Have napkins on the table so that if your child is ready to taste the food, they can politely cop out of swallowing it!