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HOW DO I GET MY CHILD TO TRY NEW FOODS?

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First and foremost, let's just get it out there that both typical children and those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder can be picky eaters. So, how do you differentiate between "typical" picky eating or when intervention is deemed necessary?

You know it is a problem when eating is impeding with daily functioning and becomes a barrier to living a healthy life. For instance, travel becomes burdensome due to restricted options, you have to cook for them separately, buy specific brands or foods have to be cut a certain way.

A few things to consider before starting to get your child to try new foods are select the most powerful reinforcers (motivators), making sure you have ample time, and understanding that this will not happen overnight. Most importantly, meals should remain an enjoyable activity for all. There is a plethora of procedures to use and levels of severity to assess. However, this article is going to focus on the easiest method to use and has been scientifically proven to be the most effective which is the *premack* principle. The *premack* principle is defined as contingent access to high frequency behaviors serves as a reinforcer for low frequency behaviors. For instance, taking a bite of an apple (low frequency behavior) will result in having access to a cookie (high frequency behavior). Sounds easy, right? That is not the case at all. Everyone makes the mistake of starting with the new food right away. What you should be doing is starting with less preferred foods that are in their repertoire. Once they eat successfully and consistently for a couple of days you can start to embed similar foods in that category and increase the reward. The effort has to match the reward.



954-828-0425

INFO@THERAPIES4KIDS.COM

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