PICKY EATERS VS. FEEDING DISORDERS: RECOGNIZING THE DIFFERENCES

Sarina Murrell

IECC 2018
About me...
Now, who are these people I’m sitting with?

Think of one FOOD word to describe your table to share with the group
ICE Breaker or JAW Breaker?

- Pair up
- Pick one of you to be Person A and the other to be Person B
- Person A – Close your eyes!!!
Person B

◦ Give Person A a drink of water from the Dixie Cup

◦ Without TALKING!
Ok, Now Person B’s turn!

- Close your eyes
Person A

- Give Person B a bite of a Snappea Crisp

  - Tell your partner you are giving him/her a **fragol** (fray-goal)
    (don’t explain what it is)
Let’s Reflect

◦ What did you each feel when being fed?
◦ What did you feel when you were feeding?
◦ What do you think our kids feel?
◦ How can we help this process go smoother?
Why is eating so important?

How might eating be challenging for an infant/toddler/preschooler?
Food for thought...

- What is healthy eating?
- What is good nutrition?
- How do you eat?
What is picky eating?
How we eat...
Why does picky eating drive us nuts?

- We know children need a variety of foods
- We want children to develop good eating habits
- We know they will like it if they try it
- We think children should do as they are told
- WE had to eat what WE were served
- We are tired of serving foods they won’t eat
Keep in mind

- Preschoolers are notoriously picky

- What do we know about how young children learn?
When is it more than “picky eating”? 
Picky Eating vs. Feeding Difficulty

**Picky Eaters**

- Transient
- Foods lost due to “burn out” because of a food jag are usually re-gained after a 2 week break
- Reduced dietary variety (30+ foods)
- Able to tolerate new foods on plate and usually can touch or taste a new food
- Still meets nutritional requirements from diet
- Up to 50% of typically developing children will experience ‘picking eating’

**Feeding Difficulty**

- Ongoing
- Foods lost due to food jags are NOT re-acquired
- Reduced dietary variety (<20 foods)
- Cries and “falls apart” when presented with new foods
- Ongoing food neophobia
- Behavioral difficulties at mealtime
- Occurs more frequently in children with a developmental disability (over 80%)
What developmental disorders might affect feeding/eating?
Terminology to Consider

- Dysphagia
- Aspiration
- GERD
- FTT
- SPD
- PICA
MANAGEMENT OF FEEDING DIFFICULTY

◦ Pediatrician

◦ Dietician

◦ Speech-Language Pathologist
  ◦ • Examine oral motor/swallowing skills

◦ Occupational Therapist
  ◦ • Examine sensory processing and motor tone skills

◦ Psychologist/Counselor

◦ Teachers / Educators / Childcare providers

◦ Parents / Caregivers
Have you heard?

○ “He’ll grow out of it.”
○ “He looks healthy/he’s growing fine.”
○ “She’s just being difficult.”
○ “She’ll eat when she’s hungry”
Questions to screen for possible feeding disorder concerns?

- Which/How many foods does s/he eat?
- How much does s/he eat?
- How long does it take her/him to eat?
- What abnormalities are noticed
  - Before eating?
  - During eating?
  - After eating?
Possible Red Flags of a Feeding/Swallowing Disorder

- Eating very little for a prolonged period of time
- Losing weight
- Frequent coughing, gagging or throat clearing during or soon after eating
- A “wet” or “gurgly” sounding voice or cry after eating
- Excessive drooling / Food leaking from mouth
- Excessive spitting up or vomiting after eating
- Refusing to eat certain textures or temperatures of food
- Refusal or lack of motivation to eat
Possible Red Flags of a Feeding/Swallowing Disorder

- Prolonged mealtime duration
- May insist on foods being preferred in specific ways or will only eat a specific brand/style of food.
- Almost always eats food different than the rest of the family.
- Will suddenly refuse a food they previously preferred and never eat it again.
- May only eat with distractions like a tablet, tv, or toys.
- Often reliance on ‘easy to eat’ junk foods
- Family stress related to the child’s eating patterns
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.
Begin where you are

- Make a list of the foods and drinks the child will accept
- Make small, gradual changes as new food are introduced
  - Introduce a different brand of the same type of food
  - Introduce a different form of the same type of food
  - Change one factor at a time (color, texture, size, temperature, etc.)
- Keep mealtimes relaxed, comfortable, and interactive to enhance the child’s association between eating and pleasure
- Build acceptance through gradual, repeated exposure
Take the pressure off – You and Them

◦ Trying to get a child to eat more than she wants makes her eat less.

◦ Trying to get her to eat less than she wants makes her eat more.

◦ Trying to get her to eat certain foods makes her avoid them.

◦ Trying to get her to be neat and tidy makes her messy.

◦ Putting up with negative behavior in hopes she will eat makes her behave badly but not eat.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-Term View</th>
<th>Long-Term View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>◦ Parents get frustrated with their child or blame themselves; lack of understanding</td>
<td>◦ Understand how child development relates to eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Getting kids to eat today</td>
<td>◦ Teaching kids to eat healthy for a lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Attempt to change what isn’t changeable; Kids get the message they are bad eaters</td>
<td>◦ Appreciate many transitions are normal &amp; work with it; kids feel good about eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Not prepared for challenges</td>
<td>◦ Parents are knowledgeable, patient and prepared for challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ Children might not eat well, and in turn can't regulate their food intake</td>
<td>◦ Children eat better, regular food intake, and enjoy eating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources


- [http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/](http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/)
Q & A
Resources

◦ American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) www.asha.org ASHA is the professional organization for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. They offer wonderful resources for families and caregivers.
◦ Children’s Hospital of Milwaukee www.chw.org This is one of the premier feeding and swallowing clinics in the country. They offer lots of articles and information.
◦ Small Wonders ~ A Preemie Place http://hometown.aol.com/Lmwill262/index.html Laura Williams’ website has important feeding tips and stories for parents of children born premature. Be sure to read: Weight & Feeding: A Preemie Parent’s Struggle, Feeding Tips for Preemies, and Treatment for Behavioral Aspects of Feeding Disorders. Includes the excellent Feeding Forum.
◦ Dysphagia Resource Center http://www.dysphagia.com/ Resources for swallowing and swallowing disorders. Includes the excellent Dysphagia
◦ Marcus Institute, Emory University http://www.marcus.org/feedfocus.htm Information on feeding disorder programs for young children, and several articles.


Sarina Murrell
Sarina.Murrell@gmail.com