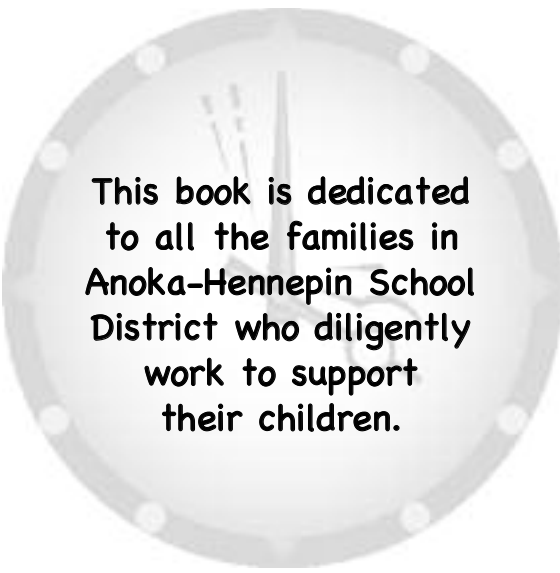




Managing Mealtime



Produced by Anoka-Hennepin Schools
Special Education Department
Occupational Therapy



**This book is dedicated
to all the families in
Anoka-Hennepin School
District who diligently
work to support
their children.**





Managing Mealtime

Mealtimes are an important part of life within a family. But some children make mealtime a real challenge because they either won't eat or they eat only certain foods. Sometimes it is certain tastes or textures of food they avoid. Other children have difficulty managing spoons, forks and cups. It has been said that up to 45% of typical children can be called "resistant eaters".

Many people believe that eating is instinctual and no matter what happens a child will eat. But some children have had their natural instincts interrupted by prematurity, a physical condition or developmental issues like autism. The reasons children learn not to eat is just as varied as are the children themselves.

This booklet contains some of the basic ingredients you can put together for a unique, family friendly recipe your family can enjoy. Hopefully, this recipe will make mealtimes more pleasant for everyone at the dining table. Use as you would ingredients in any recipe:

- Measure them...
- Combine them...
- Vary them depending upon the desired result...
- Pick and choose the ones which work best for your family....
- Be creative...
- And most important, remember that the most important ingredient is sprinkling the whole dish with a generous amount of love!

Ingredients

How to get IT from HERE to THERE

Try wrapping some foam around the utensil handle to make it easier for those small hands to hold.

If the food in a spoon keeps getting “dumped” down the front before it gets put into a mouth...try bending the bowl of the spoon, so there is a curve between the handle and the bowl of the spoon.

The best cups for teaching little ones to drink are small with flared tops.

Cutting out a U shaped portion of the top of a soft plastic cup will require less tipping of the cup when drinking.

Save those plastic cups with covers that come with many Kids meals in restaurants to reuse in the home setting. Add a new straw and they are almost spill proof like sippee cups.

If you want a covered cup which is spillproof similar to a sippee cup, try to find one which has a recessed lid and a small opening for the liquid.

The reason a sippee cup is an easy transition away from using a bottle is because drinking from a sippee uses the same mouth pattern (sucking) as does a bottle. Try using a covered cup with a straw instead.

Placing some Scoot Guard under bowls and placemats will keep everything in place. Putting small pieces of hot melt glue under cups and plates will also keep them from sliding.



What's that cooking in the kitchen...

The following recipes use inexpensive food items which may challenge a child's sense of smell and touch. Rather than play with food, cooks up some of these recipes and let your child play with stuff made from common food items and are fun, smelly and colorful!

Finger Paint

3 tablespoons sugar
½ cup corn starch
2 cups cold water
food coloring

Mix all ingredients, then finger paint.

Koolaid Finger Paint

2 cups flour
2 packs KoolAid
½ cup salt
3 cups boiling water
3 tablespoons oil

Mix ingredients, then finger paint.

Nutter Butter Play Dough

1 cup peanut butter
1 cup powdered milk
1 cup honey
1 cup oatmeal

Mix together and play!

Oatmeal dough

1 cup flour

2 cups oatmeal

1 cup water

Gradually add water to flour and oatmeal

Silly putty

2 parts white glue

1 part Sta-flo liquid starch

Mix and play!

Bubbles

1 cup water

2 tablespoons light Karo syrup

4 tablespoons dish washing liquid

Mix and enjoy!

Clown Paint

1/8 cup baby lotion

1/4 teaspoon tempera paint powder

1 squirt liquid soap

Mix, play and then take a bath!

How kids sense food.

Kids sense food using smell, taste, touch and texture.

If at first you don't succeed...

RULES with New foods.

RULE of 10: Try exposing your child to a new food 10 times before deciding that he really doesn't like it. Sometimes, it takes that long to be "accustomed" to a new taste, texture or look.

RULE of 3: Only present 3 foods on a plate at one time.

RULE of 1: Give your child only 1 tablespoon of food for each year of their age when introducing new foods. The less of a new food on the plate, the better.

RULE of 20: Give your child 20 minutes during meal times....either ignore or mildly reinforce their efforts to eat or try new foods for 20 minutes only.

RULE OF SPACE: Make your child (over 3) responsible to clean up their eating space. Touching a non preferred food when scraping a plate/bowl can be a first step to tasting it.

RULE of HALF: Foods which are presented in small, chewable bites that can be finger fed have best chance to be eaten.

RULE of PREFERENCE: When introducing new foods, always pair with a food you know is one your child prefers.

General Guidelines

You DO have control over WHERE your child eats.

Create a consistent place to eat. Become a role model by eating at the table and limiting distractions. Think of mealtimes as “family” time and not TV time, even if made difficult by your picky eater. Research supports families eating together, uninterrupted, are stronger families.

You DO have control over WHAT you offer your child to eat.

1. When introducing new foods to a child who is picky, think of making “gentle changes”. For example, if the only vegetable your baby likes is baby food carrots, then introduce mashed carrots “toddler style”.
2. Always serve a nonpreferred food with a preferred food. Just cause your child doesn't like peas, don't let that stop you from putting a very small amount on their plate next to their favorite mac n cheese.
3. Think small portions for small bodies. 1 tablespoon of food per year is considered an appropriate serving size.



You DO have control over WHEN your child eats.

Mealtimes for the picky eater should be at same time as other family members.

1. Offer limited snacks and grazing between meals, again considering the setting where the food is offered.
2. If your child uses symbols, put a meal time picture on their schedule.
3. Give your child 20 minutes to eat supper. If they don't eat within 20 minutes, offer them their plate again before bedtime.



You DO have control over HOW your child eats and drinks.

1. Offer age appropriate utensils and cups.
2. Eating with fingers is OK for "most" foods.
3. Foods which stick to a spoon (i.e. oatmeal) are easier than those which slide off. (i.e. cereal and milk)
4. Do consult with your teacher/OT if you are concerned whether you have the right cups/utensils for your child.



BUT... You DON'T have control over WHETHER your child eats. Only your child can eat their food.

MYTH BUSTERS:

- You can still be a good parent if your child doesn't eat
- You can't make kids eat by "pushing" them.
- Therapy ALONE will not help my child to eat.

A Picky Eater Or A Problem Feeder?

A Picky eater....

- Decreased range or variety of foods.
- Will eat 30 different foods or more.
- Foods lost due to "burn out" because of a food jag are usually re-gained after a 2-week break.
- Able to tolerate new foods on plate and usually can touch or taste a new food. (even if reluctantly)
- Eats at least one food from most all food texture groups.

A Problem Feeder...

- Restricted range or variety of foods usually less than 20 different 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.

Online Resources

www.usda.gov

www.equipmentshop.com

www.talktools.com

www.spdfoundation.net

www.deceptivelydelicious.com

References:

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Handout from conference Summer Institute, District 11,
Anoka, MN

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From parents in the Anoka-Hennepin School District





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