



The New Social Story Book

Illustrated Edition

Revisions by Ms. Carol Gray

The stories in this book were originally written for children and adults with autistic spectrum disorders by students in Mrs. Sandy Johnson's psychology and sociology classes at Jenison High School in Jenison, Michigan.

Edited by:

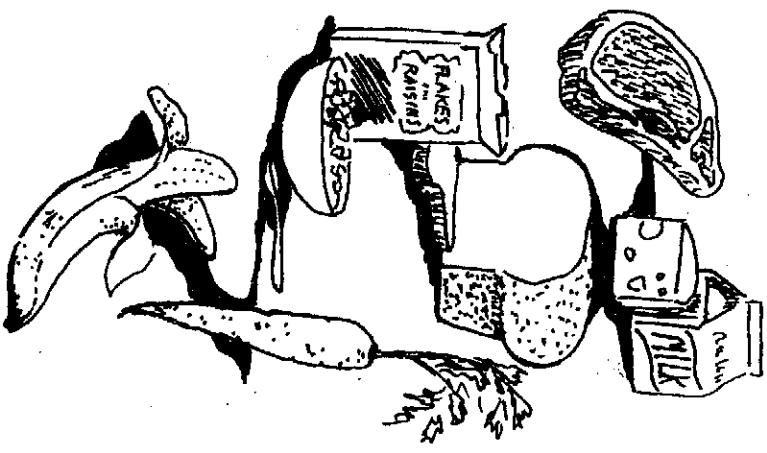
Stacy Arnold
Damon Burg
Carol Gray
Kelly Goward
Sarah Hayes
Luke Jenison
Carie Jonker
Sue Jonker
Karen Lind
Joe Smiegel
Steve Wesorik
Chad Zuber

Illustrations and Cover Design by Sue Lynn Pauken

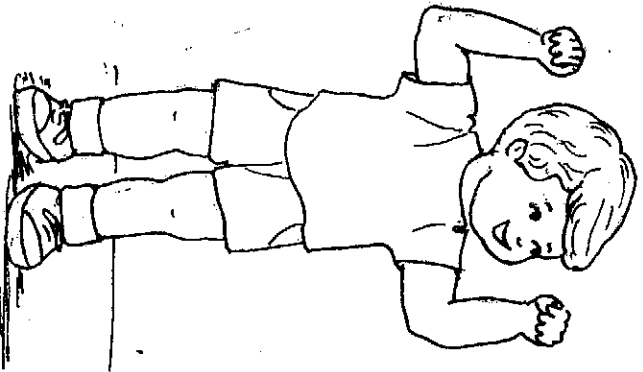
Learning to Eat Healthy Foods

The five major food groups are meat, dairy, bread and cereal, vegetables, and fruit.

It is important for people to eat food from the five major food groups.



Eating foods from the five major food groups helps me stay healthy.



I will try to eat healthy food.

It makes others happy to know I eat healthy foods to keep my body growing strong.

Some People Try New Foods

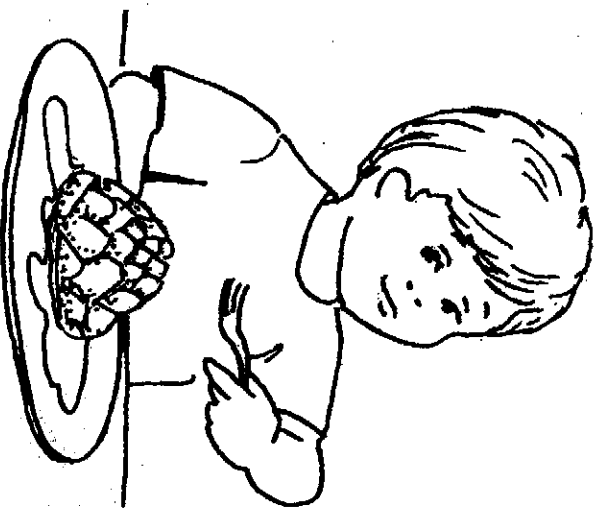
When I am eating, I may see food that I have not tried before. I will not know what it tastes like unless I try some.

Sometimes people ask me to try a new food. That's because they think I may like it.

I may like to try new foods. Sometimes if I like it, I can have more.

If I do not like it, it's okay to say, "No, thank you."

Trying new food is a good way to discover which foods I like to eat.



Eating at the Table

Usually, people eat meals at a table.

This makes it easier to eat neatly and safely.

I will try to sit at the table while I am eating.

Mom likes it when I eat at the table.



Food Chaining

The Proven 6-Step Plan
to Stop Picky Eating,
Solve Feeding Problems, and
Expand Your Child's Diet

Cheri Fraker, CCC/SLP,
Laura Walbert, CCC/SLP, Sibyl Cox, LD, RD
and Mark Fishbein, MD
with Shannon Cole Barker, OTR/L

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FOOD CHAINING: *The Proven 6-Step Plan to Stop Picky Eating, Solve Feeding Problems, and
Expand Your Child's Diet*

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Sibyl Cox, LD, RD, and Mark Fishbein, MD

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It's important to note that this book should not be used as a substitute for professional evaluation and treatment of your child's feeding problem. We have written it to provide insight and guidance for parents of picky and problem eaters, and it should only be used in conjunction with a medically supervised treatment plan.

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Here are some activities you can do with your child at home to teach him about the properties of food. Make sure to discuss the properties of the foods you're using with each activity.

- Encourage your child to open the lids of containers or the packages of food, or grab a kiwi or some asparagus out of the crisper for you, so he can become accustomed to the smell, appearance, and texture of the food. Talk about the properties of the food before you begin handling or tasting it.
- Show your child how fun it can be to stir food, squash it, smell it, pour it into different containers, and dump it out again. If your child is uncomfortable having direct contact with the food, that's OK. Have him use nonlatex gloves, cover his hands in plastic wrap, or use paintbrushes or wooden play utensils to explore the food.
- Sit down at the table and play with food—squish it, wiggle it, poke it, finger paint with the food to make animal or people pictures, let your child break it open with his hands. Let your child make a mess with the food, even if he puts it on his face or body, or in his hair. Encourage any kind of interaction he has with food.
- Create a food chart out of poster board to categorize food properties with the following descriptors: crunchy, soft, wet, flaky, smooth, slimy, tough,

- rough, bumpy, squishy, tart, and sweet. Make it a family activity, and have each family member provide input. You could use the chart at each meal or designate a certain meal each day to use it.
- With a pair of scissors, cut various colors of felt into the shapes of different foods and pretend to feed them to stuffed animals or dolls with your child.
- Purchase a food coloring book and color in foods together.
- Use foods as a coloring modality. For example, use a pretzel stick and melted cheese to draw a mouse, or use an Oreo cookie and frosting to draw the cookie monster.
- Take foods and make a picture of a person (i.e., vanilla wafers for eyes, licorice strings for hair, M&M's for eyes, a jelly bean for a nose, Bugles for fingers, and pretzel sticks for arms and legs).
- Take your child to the grocery store and hand him your grocery list. Enlist his help in finding some or all of the foods and placing them in the cart. This is an invaluable experience and a great way for you to expose him to many different foods at one time.
- Play with toy foods. Playing restaurant, going on a pretend picnic, and having a princess tea party can be a lot of fun. Children enjoy feeding toy food to puppets. You can follow up the activity with re-creating your evening meal with real foods.
- Use cookie cutters to cut food into different shapes.

- Show your child how foods pull apart and how to crush them up.
- Welcome little hands into the kitchen. Cook meals with your child, let him gather the ingredients and discuss the food properties, let him measure the foods, let him smell the foods, watch cooking shows with him, or look through kid-friendly cookbooks with your child for fun recipes to follow.

If it is determined that your child has a sensory processing disorder that is affecting his eating, you will work with both the occupational therapist and the speech therapist (see chapter 3 for more information on the speech therapist's role in food chaining) to develop a customized program to help your child recognize, understand, and actively explore the sensory properties of foods.

HAVING FUN WITH FOOD

A big part of improving your child's behavior at mealtimes is finding ways to put the fun back into food. Most picky and problems eaters do not view mealtimes as fun, social events, which is what they should be. A more relaxed and fun approach to food and mealtimes will help your child begin to look forward to eating. This in turn will make her more receptive to trying new foods and help the food-chaining program succeed. Here are some ways you can help your child learn about food in an entertaining, nonthreatening manner:

LET'S GO SHOPPING

Anxiety can diminish a child's appetite. If you have difficulty getting your child to the table for a snack or a meal, or if she's anxious about the food you're giving her, introducing a fun, food-related activity before offering food can help her feel more comfortable. Cut pictures of food out of magazines or off the actual food packages and give them to your child to create

a shopping list. Then, with your kitchen masquerading as a grocery store, make a game out of shopping for the foods on her list. We encourage you to be as silly as you want, perhaps hiding the carrots in your pots and pans cabinet and the peanut butter in the oven. (Note: You might want to hide your child's favorite snacks when playing this game—you don't want her to stumble upon the Goldfish crackers and then have to argue with her over eating some. This is supposed to be a calming activity, not an anxiety-provoking one!)

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Allowing your child some control over her food choices can help make mealtimes more pleasant. Make your child index cards with the names and pictures of different food choices. You can allow her to decide on one food for the meal or the entire meal. For instance, if you want your child to choose a fruit, give her one card with an apple on it and another card with a banana on it. We suggest you allow your child to choose between only two or three foods at the most. Giving her too many choices can be confusing.

You can also use the index cards to allow your child to tell you what food she wants to eat first, second, or third. However, if you're going to try this strategy, you may need to help your child make wise choices. For instance, if one of the foods you're serving is warm and should be eaten that way, don't allow your child to choose to eat it last, when it's cold. The taste of the food can change as it grows cold. You should also not allow your child to designate a new food to be eaten at the

end of a meal. You don't want his anxiety about trying the new food to build as the meal progresses to the point where he won't touch it.

IT'S IN THE BAG

Many children with sensory processing problems (see chapter 4 for more information) gag when food touches their hands. If your child won't eat certain foods because touching them is unpleasant for her, helping her to explore foods by touching them is the first step toward overcoming the problem. Place plastic baggies over your child's hands and show her how she can manipulate and explore the food without getting her hands messy. Have her assist you in scooping or squeezing food items such as Easy Cheese, whipped cream, icing, pudding, Jell-O, cream cheese, or marshmallow cream in a plastic bag. Smell the food once it is in the baggie and encourage your child to do the same. Then seal the bag and suggest your child draw designs in the food through the baggie with her finger, or make tracks in the food by driving a toy car or train over the baggie. During these activities, discuss with your child how the food feels, sounds, and tastes.

You can also place dry food items such as cookies, crackers, or dry cereal in a baggie and discuss how the food changes as your child manipulates it. Suggest your child use a rolling pin to crush the dry food item, or a mallet to pulverize it into a powder. These strategies can also be used with mixed textured foods, such as Jell-O with fruit, cheesecake, or a casserole. Remember to talk with your child about what she is touching

and how it would feel in her mouth. For instance, if you're talking about cheesecake, you could say, "When I take a bite of this cheesecake, it's very soft until my teeth hit the crust. Then it gets a little crunchy."

CHANGE THE SHAPE

Dig out those cookie cutters and show your child how fun it can be to change the shape of food. A cooked lasagna noodle, Jell-O, cheese, bread, lunch meat, pancakes, or a soft tortilla can all be cut into fun shapes. Engaging with food in this way helps your child become familiar with it through smell and touch. With close supervision, you can also allow your child to cut soft foods with a knife.

FUNKY PRESENTATION

Ditch those utensils and break out the fancy toothpicks—you know, the ones with the colorful frilly tops! Help your child arrange the food you've prepared for a snack into a fun design or shape—a circle of cheese and Cheetos makes a great sun. Grapes for eyes, a raisin for a nose, and strips of string cheese for a mouth and hair make a funny face! Buy some fun place mats and allow your child to determine which family member gets which place mat. Divided trays (the ones you used to see in the school lunchroom) or divided plates allow foods to be placed separately so that they don't touch one another and prevent the juice from a fruit or vegetable from mixing with other food items. Let your child decide which food item should go in which compartment.

LITTLE CHEFS

Let your child pour, stir, and scoop food into different containers or into the cooking apparatus as you're making a meal. We strongly encourage you to cook with your child to help her learn how different foods can be combined to make a new food, and how the smell of food changes as it cooks. Children who cook with their parents are proud of their participation and are often more apt to try a food that they have helped make. Plus, the more they know about how food is cooked, the less fearful they will be of food.

There are so many ways to incorporate fun learning activities about food into your day. These activities will help lighten the stress at meals for your entire family.

Bad mealtime behaviors can be among the toughest behaviors to handle. They cause huge amounts of stress and tension in families and can make the underlying feeding problems even harder to tackle. The advice and strategies in this chapter should go a long way toward helping you get your child's behavior both at the table and away from the table under control. Again, we encourage you to consult with a behavioral psychologist should these behaviors persist or worsen. In the next chapter, you will learn how to put the food-chaining solution into action.