



The Autism Mommy's  
Picky Eater

*Protocol*



## Autism's Mommy's Picky Eater's Process

**Eating is a biological human need. Eating a well balanced diet is also a biological human need.**

As babies, our children cry to get fed. As toddlers, non-verbal or not, still communicate with us to EAT. (ie take our hand and pull us, point, show us the food they want)

As human animals, we ensure our survival by getting food. Now, if we do not get our children the proper balanced diet they need, there are nutritional deficiencies that can happen which can wreak havoc on their system.

**It's BEYOND important for the deepening of your relationship with the child.**

Eating and mealtime is a time for connection, love and gathering.

**Finally, it's so important to expand your child's palette for flexibility.**

Children on the spectrum like what they like.

They like structure, routine.... And they like the foods they get accustomed to having.

We want to shake up their tree as much as possible to allow for flexibility, transitions and growth opportunities in every aspect of their development (not just with food).



# the *Big 3* & Picky Eating

## What I call the "BIG 3"

The skills every CHILD with Autism needs for a CHANCE at a life of INDEPENDENCE:

1. Potty Training
2. Problem behavior at zero (or close to zero) and can sit and attend
3. Communication

What does that have to do with Picky Eaters??...  
EVERYTHING

In order to ACHIEVE The Big 3, we need our children healthy and eating a balanced diet for overall brain health.

Each of these skills can be impacted by picky eating.

## 1. Potty Training

Without proper diet and nutrition, gut issues and constipation/diarrhea can happen and can directly impact the start and success of potty training.

## 2. Problem Behavior/Sitting + Attending

When offering new foods and getting our children to expand their palette, it can trigger aggressive behavior to where necessary intervention is required for the growth of the child. Children need the capacity to sit and attend to try new foods.

## 3. Communication

Lastly, communication sprouts when getting their needs met. Food is a biological human need. It's the place we are able to establish and expand that communication.



A frequently asked question we get at Champions for Our Children is:

**How do I get my autistic child trying new foods?**

WHY IS THIS SKILL SO IMPORTANT?

# STEP 1: LUNCH LADY THINKING



**“You get what you get,  
and you don’t get upset”**

We’ve been able to provide communication skills for Non Verbal Children, ages 2, 3 up to teens

We’ve 100% successfully potty trained every child coming through our program.

We’ve taught parents techniques that have their children trying new foods....

All of which we’ve been able to do in a matter of WEEKS in my Coaching Program.

**Why do Kids  
with ASD  
Struggle with  
Trying New  
Foods?**





**THIS IS THE  
SINGLE MOST  
IMPORTANT  
THING YOU  
NEED TO  
KNOW..**

**Broccoli Bootcamp Book  
Keith Williams and Laura Seiverling  
-both BCBA's**

They state: "Some parents of children with special needs have told us **they doubted** that interventions to expand their children's diet variety would be successful because their children are **NON VERBAL.**"



**HAVE YOU HAD  
THOUGHTS SUCH  
AS THESE  
(I KNOW I HAVE):**

"My child is never going to eat anything but cheetos or chicken nuggets."

"I am never going to get my child eating a regular meal."

"I wish my child can eat like "normal" kids."

"I can't stand the fighting and tantruming when it comes to food, so I just give in."

"I wish my child would eat healthier."





"Lifetime Member of the Picky Eater Club"

"She keeps running away"

"He's getting stronger, his hitting is scaring me"

"DIAPERS IN ADULT SIZES"

"NON VERBAL, I just want to know what he wants!"



- **What are you thoughts around your child achieving the Big 3 AND Trying New Foods?**
- **Do you think they are capable of getting these skills?**
- **Do you think YOU are capable of helping them get there?**
- **Does Autism mean nothing but diapers and Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches for life?**

**Does Autism mean  
CANCER to you?**



**Getting our Autistic Children trying new foods and achieving the Big 3 starts with our BELIEFS in what WE THEIR PARENTS are capable of FIRST and What THEY are capable of 2nd!**

*The #1 reason stopping your child from trying new foods are your thoughts about it.*

**Your thoughts create your RESULTS.**







**YOUR THINKING  
NEEDS TO BE SETTING  
YOURSELF AND,  
YOUR CHILD UP FOR  
SUCCESS WHEN IT  
COMES TO TRYING  
NEW FOODS, AND  
THE BIG 3.**

**THOUGHTS** create **EMOTIONS**.

Emotions create the **Action/Inaction**  
which creates the **RESULTS** in your life  
and the life of your child.

Knowing that your **THINKING** is **CREATING** your  
current **EMOTIONS** around your child trying  
new foods.



Now knowing that your  
**EMOTIONS** are **CREATING**  
your current **ACTIONS**  
or **IN ACTIONS** around  
your child trying  
new foods.

Therefore - Your thinking  
is **CREATING** your current  
**RESULTS** around your  
child trying new foods....



# THOUGHTS ARE OPTIONAL!

You get to **CHOOSE** your thinking to get **NEW EMOTIONS, ACTIONS AND..... RESULTS!!!!**



**I HELP PARENTS TO THINK INTENTIONALLY TO GET THE RESULTS THEY WANT FOR THEIR CHILDREN ON THE SPECTRUM.**

For anyone here that has tried and failed at anything, you will have repeated thoughts you've been thinking for a while about it:

**For Us:** Losing Weight, Getting a new job, Quitting Smoking/Drinking

**For our kids:** Potty Training, Trying New Foods, Communicating..

And that's ok.

You've been defaulting to them, this is what our brain does!

But now we want **to think NEW THOUGHTS on purpose to get NEW RESULTS.**

## T.E.A. LINE EXAMPLE (Thought, Emotion, Action)

### DEFAULT TEA LINE

**Circumstance/Fact** - My child doesn't get variety in his diet.

**Thought:** "my child won't ever be a healthy eater"

**Emotion:** devastated, hopeless

**Action:** Stop offering new foods.

**Result:** Child eats the same foods, you feel like a bad parent.

### INTENTIONAL TEA LINE

**Circumstance/Fact** - My child doesn't get variety in his diet.

**Thought:** I will not stop trying till she tried 1 food at a time

**Emotion:** Determined

**Action:** Create a Plan, detailed scheduled

**Result:** My child is getting variety in his diet!





## STEP 2: PICKY EATER “MEAT AND POTATOES” (HARD TRUTHS)

46% to 89 % of children with ASD have some form of food selectivity (source: Ledford and Gast, 2006)

Diagnostic Criteria for an Autism Diagnosis include having restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities...

Criteria includes insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns

Eating the same food every day is an example of such behavior.





Their Problems with Social Communication make learning to eat a wider variety of food more difficult

Children with ASD do not imitate what others are modeling during mealtime - neurotypical children learn to try new foods by observing their parents or peers eat new foods and copying them

Studies show that school aged children with ASD eat on average about half as many dairy products, fruits, vegetables, and proteins as children without ASD

Fewer than half of children with ASD were reported to eat the family meal

Mealtimes are complex, it involves food, responding to instructions, understanding and meeting expectations

Just like anything else, this skill is something that needs to be taught in bite size chunks.

**PUN INTENDED :-)**





# STEP 2: THE PICKY EATER PROCESS

## PSA TIME!!! Check with you Doctor!

As with anything we suggest, always check with your doctor. It is standard practice if you were to hire a feeding specialist that they will NOT start services until the child has:

- Been Cleared by Pediatrician
- Checked for Swallowing, Chewing or Packing Issues (Packing food into cheeks)
- Gastro intestinal issues (Seen by a Gastroenterologist)
- Dental Exam



## FOR TEACHING ANY KIDS ANYTHING!!!!

"The Presence or absence of any type of special needs is far less predictive of the success of an intervention than the **CONSISTENCY** in implementing the intervention."

-Broccoli Boot Camp



## THE TASTING SESSION!!

### PREPARATION

#### 1. MUST BE HUNGRY

2. Make a List of Preferred, Neutral (Tolerate but not their favorite foods), and Non Preferred Foods

3. Select a Food - OR Pick 3 (We've always done one at a time with Julianna because she could throw up on the site of new foods) -If the child is old enough and is able, you can give them choices. Choice Allows Children to feel in control and they have a say in what we work on

4. If they can't suggest, pick a food that the child is exposed to a lot (ie: we did Pizza, because that is what is served at birthday parties/social functions, etc.)

5. Pick your REINFORCER - Can be on the preferred food list, IPAD time, tickles, games, something they earn, token board, etc. \*\*Preferred reinforcer ideally is preferred foods, to keep focus on eating.





# THE TASTING SESSION!!



## Bite for Bite

One Bite of the Food Presented (PEA SIZED) for One Bite of the Reinforcer - we try to make the reinforcer edible and this is why doing sessions when they are HUNGRY - this is key.

The Goal is for the child to understand the more they eat, the more they get of their Reinforcer.

When they complete a 10 minute session, they get a handful of the REWARD contingent on how much they ate (ie: 3 bites = one reward for each bite and then 3 extra when 10 minute timer goes off).

Every 3 sessions we move to a bigger bite, till we feel there is mastery.

Once pea size tasting is mastered, we can add this food to their mealtimes in same size mastered in session.

Adding a preferred beverage that a child can sip on in between bites can help streamline the session as children can get comfortable from this.

Show them if they eat the pea sized food, they will get a reinforcement but this is not a session, this is continuing that exposure we got during a tasting session (ie: Dinner Time, Lunch Time, Snack, etc. NOT SESSION).

Put food on other family members plates and praise and reward them when they eat it (Approximal Praise can be a high value reward system).

1. Timed Sessions of 10 Minutes - MAKE SURE CHILD IS HUNGRY (NO FOOD FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR)

2. Reinforcer Ready

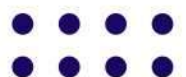
3. Plan to ignore inappropriate behavior, EXPECT GAGGING WHINING, FACIAL Grimaces

4. TOLERATING THE PRESENCE of the Food is always the first step BEFORE having the child try the food - Tolerating includes: having the food nearby without pushing it away, no whining/crying, no maladaptive behaviors at site of it, just neutral to its closeness to the child for the full 10 minutes

**- AT LEAST 3 Successful Sessions of this before moving on to next step AND REINFORCEMENT IS RECEIVED FOR DOING THIS SUCCESSFULLY!** Can be small.

-If there is serious behaviors that erupt at the site of the food we need to reduce exposure time down starting at 5 seconds, 10 seconds, 30 seconds, up to 3x @ 10 minutes

5. Next we are going to Touch, Smell, Put To your Mouth, Lick, TASTE - once any of these are done, we REWARD with Reinforcer - 3x of this behavior for 10 minute sessions each = Mastery and you can move to the next step



Watch My Kids during a  
Tasting Session.

Click the link below





## Generalization of Trying New Foods Outside of Behavior Session.

Click link to view



# Not all Chicken Nuggets are EQUAL



Once you've established mastery of a certain food, you want to manipulate the preference by presenting it in different settings, different plates/bowls/cups, different varieties.

ie: Purdue Chicken Nuggets, Dinosaur Shape, Popcorn Chicken, Tenders Cut Up.

If Purdue is the preferred and now we want the child to try other varieties, bite for bite the preferred nugget to a Wendys, McDonalds, etc..

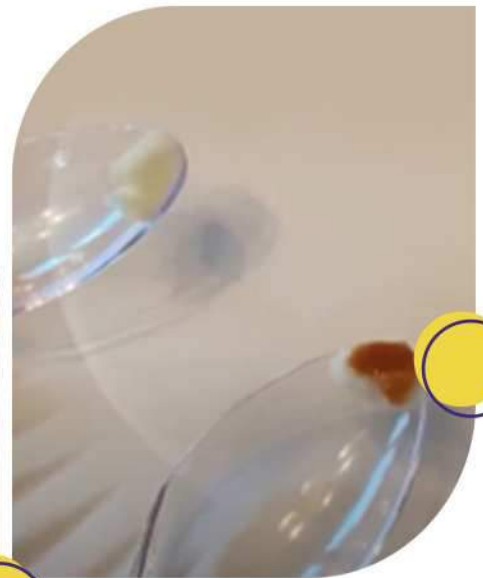


# TASTE BUDS VS PICKY EATER?

We need to be super observant during the sessions - Does the child seem to show physical signs on their face they don't like the taste, its a genuine automatic response vs. a whining to not try anything

If they are verbal ask why they don't like it

Intuition and awareness around this will help you to pick foods that they would more likely like in the future



## LET'S ADOPT THE LUNCH LADY MOTTO:

1. Kids Won't Change Until We (Parents) Change
2. We can't let kids dictate things
3. Keep Food Options Simple, but keep offering
4. When Kids are hungry, they will eat
5. Activity FIRST, EAT 2nd





Hey There! Coach Michelle Here! Not sure if you know about our Journey but my daughter was diagnosed with Autism at age 2. She was non verbal in the most restrictive special education preschool class (6:1:4) and she went from no language, to sign language, then to speaking. She today is in a 2nd Grade Integrated Classroom in General Education School with Typical Peers. I'm going to be honest with you, I probably wasted time with my daughter. I probably could have gotten to where we are today FASTER if I had someone to support me and help me out of my fear story. Us WARRIOR MOMS need to quickly get out of our heads, process our emotions, and hit the ground RUNNING. The true GAME CHANGERS are the one who take action the fastest. I WISH I had someone in my corner, taking me from the darkness to the light.

My Gift to You! a 30 Minute Strategy Call! There are a ton of resources at your disposal that you need to access and implement as soon as possible. I will proudly be the parent by your side that understands and is cheering for you because I have lived it. I am confident that I can be a valuable guide who will help you see through the fog of uncertainty and overwhelm to chart a course of successful development for your child. That's why I want to offer you a FREE 30 Minute Strategy Call! This Strategy session is where I will help you get clear on your vision of what you want for you and your child, and help you craft an action plan so you can make it happen! Click [HERE](#) to book your call! We look forward to talking to you soon!

I'm Michelle Rogers from Champions for Our Children.....

and If I can only help one child, I want it to be



## *My Gift to You*

Want My Help Getting Your Child Potty Trained, Talking, and Stopping Their Problem Behaviors?

If you're ready for support and want my eyes on your situation, book a private Decision-Making Call with me. We'll go over what you've tried, why it hasn't worked, and whether working together makes sense.

This is where real transformation begins.

[Click Here to Book Your Call](#)

## Food Exposure Data Sheet



FOOD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Example (Peas)					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Instructions:

Use this sheet to track how often each food is offered and whether it is accepted. Each time a food is offered, mark the appropriate column. If at least one bite is eaten place a ✓ in the box, if no bites are eaten place an X in the box.

You can also use this sheet to track the size of the bites offered. For rice sized bites, place an R in the box, For pea-sized, place a P. Use 1/2 for half and F for spoonful.



[illegible]

[illegible]



[illegible]





\_\_\_\_\_ 's Weekly Meal Schedule/Menu



	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
BREAKFAST							
SNACK							
LUNCH							
SNACK							
DINNER							

Many parents make similar schedules and menus on laminated posters or whiteboards that can be changed weekly. A few have even made online menus. In our experience, this type of visual can reduce inappropriate meal time behaviour by allowing the child to know in advance what is going to be served and when food will be served.