

HOW TO TEACH SAFE FOOD EXPLORATION USING THE FOOD PROGRESSION TRACKING FORM

Focused Snack

Schedule a regular snack time so that you have plenty of time to enjoy trying new foods as a game. Make it a tea-party, teddy-bear picnic, or pirate’s feast. Sometimes siblings or friends can help with the game, and sometimes a picky eater needs your full attention. You will know which works best for your child by trying out both scenarios.

Mealtime Use

Mealtimes are first and foremost social times. Avoid getting into struggles about food. You can make a rule that everyone at the table has to “try” every food by allowing them to put a food into their “try” bowl and from there decide how they want to “try” that food.

ALWAYS LET A CHILD DECIDE HOW THEY WILL “TRY” the food in their “try” bowl. Allow a child to comment or experience the food on their own terms without comment from you. DON’T TALK ABOUT THE FOOD unless the child starts the conversation first.

Most people take about twenty repetitions of a new food before they learn to like it. All of us have foods we’ve tried a million times and still don’t like. The “Food Progression Chart” lets you keep count of how many times and ways your picky eater actually tries a new food and whether he learns to like that “new” food.

Sequence	Importance/Sensory Information
Feed it to the dog (or take it to the garbage)	Get a child to tolerate looking at a food in the same room. Go ahead and act SILLY. Remember, you are playing a game. Reassure your child that he can experience a new food at his own pace.
Feed it to someone else	Continue looking at a new food by passing it to someone’s plate (present or absent, fictional or real). Each interaction with a new food brings a higher level of comfort.
Touch the food	Skin to food contact introduces texture into your child’s experience of a new food. Touching brings the food into “intimate” contact and can be VERY <i>exciting</i> (the positive spin on challenging).
Move closer to the mouth	Intimacy increases as food moves closer to the mouth. Touching food to an elbow, shoulder or cheek increases the <i>excitement</i> level.
Smell the food	Smell activates memory and emotions which directly affect the GI system. This raises the <i>excitement</i> . Asking, “does it smell like something else you remember?” or “where do you feel it – in your head, tummy, chest, throat or somewhere else?” provides a way of processing high voltage emotions (i.e. <i>excitement</i>).
Kiss the food	Lips have as many nerve endings as our fingers so touch and smell play a role in “kissing” a food.

Lick the food	Tongues have lots of nerve endings that process <u>touch</u> . <u>Taste</u> buds identify salty, sweet, sour, bitter, spicy and pungent.
Hide the food	Moving the food from the “try” bowl to one’s plate is a BIG DEAL because it cross-contaminates the other foods. Teach this <u>survival skill</u> of pushing food around on a plate and “burying” it under other foods to make it “disappear” before going out in public or attending holiday meals.
Spit food into a napkin	Teach the <u>survival skills</u> of “spitting” and “spitting into a napkin” to save a child from fears of having to swallow a food that does not “feel good” in the mouth.
Bite or chew the food	How does it <u>sound</u> when chewing? How does the sound change with more chews?
Like	Continued exposure to a food on one’s own terms often creates comfort. None of us likes every food we try.