



The Intellectual
and Developmental
Disabilities Council
of Tarrant County

Webinar Welcome!

Healthy Habits for Picky Eaters

Presented by Katherine Lawrence, BCAS,
Founder & Nutritionist, Food Saved Me Institute

August 26, 2025

Weekly Caregiver Education Webinar

To transform the region into an inclusive community where individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) thrive.



Intellectual and
Developmental
Disabilities Council
of Tarrant County



MONTHLY MEETINGS

1ST THURSDAY EACH MONTH 9-10:30 a.m.

3136 W. 4th Street, Fort Worth

Next meeting: Sept. 4

SUMMER WEBINAR SERIES

WEEKDAY VARIES 12-1:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, Sept. 4

MAKING CONNECTIONS RESOURCES FAIR

October 11 – Fort Worth

CAPEabilities CAREER EXPLORATION EXPO

February 5 – ESC 11

TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

2ND FRIDAY EACH MONTH 9-10:30 a.m.

Location Varies

Sept. 12 - TCC Trinity River Campus

Oct. 10 – Location TBD

UPCOMING EVENTS



The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Council of Tarrant County

Caregiver Education Webinar Series Presents:

High Quality IEPs

SEPT 4, 2025 📅 12:00 pm—1:30 pm

Join us as we explore the process of creating high quality IEPs in accordance with the IDEA requirements, considering the Supreme Court's decision in the Endrew case. We will emphasize the development of a high quality IEP tailored to each student's unique needs, the components of an effective IEP statement, and the creation of challenging, ambitious, and measurable goals. Additionally, we will discuss the significance of tracking a student's progress toward achieving their IEP goals and the school's responsibility to report this progress to parents.

Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8x6d87>

PRESENTED BY

Christy Baker, a Regional Coordinator for Tarrant County, has been a teacher (2008), a special education teacher, and a transition specialist. She has worked with students with disabilities and their families for over 15 years. She is currently a Regional Coordinator for Tarrant County, where she works with parents and educators to ensure that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education. She is also a member of the Texas Council on Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services.

TEXAS RESOURCE NETWORK
Tarrant County



FREE

MAKING CONNECTIONS CENTRAL TARRANT

DISABILITY RESOURCES FOR ALL AGES

The IDD Council is proud to partner with Fort Worth ISD to host "MAKING CONNECTIONS" CENTRAL TARRANT

SATURDAY, OCT. 11, 2025 • 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
M.G. Ellis Elementary • 215 NE 14th St., Ft. Worth, 76164

Visit with organizations that provide services for the community!
Schedule and Breakout Session Details:
<https://www.iddcouncil.org/makingconnectionsftw>

Resources for:

- Medicaid Waivers/Social Security
- Guardianship/Supported Decision-Making
- Behavioral Health
- Transition & Employment Services
- College Programs
- Assistive & Adaptive Technology
- Special Needs Trusts / Wills
- Homelessness
- Assisted Living / Housing
- Financial Planning
- Recreation & Leisure
- Therapy & Camp Providers
- Respite/Day Habilitation
- and more!

Breakout Sessions Resources & Exhibitors Kid's Workshop

EXHIBITOR & SPONSOR REGISTRATION: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8x6d87>

The IDD Council's Making Connections Disability Resource Fair brings together the disability resources in our community to one easily accessible location for families and caregivers to gather information and learn about benefits and services each provide. Making Connections Disability Resource Fairs are held throughout the year in various Tarrant County locations.

SAVE THE DATE

Join us for a hands-on Career Exploration Expo for students with disabilities!



CAPEabilities

Career Exploration Expo

February 5, 2026

ESC Region 11, 1451 S. Cherry Ln., Fort Worth, TX 76108

Save this date for an engaging Job Exploration Fair tailored specifically for students with disabilities. This event provides students with the opportunity to explore various career paths, participate in breakout sessions on job-related topics to ensure employment, and access resources to support their pursuit of independence and employment. Explore career paths, meet real professionals, and discover what it takes to turn interests into opportunities.

Registration coming soon!

Presented by: The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Council of Tarrant County

Hosted by: REGION 11 TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES



Intellectual and
Developmental
Disabilities Council
of Tarrant County



Seeking Event Sponsors
and Grant Writers for
BeSafe Interactive
Screening

Welcome

NEW/RENEWING MEMBERS

- **Individual Members:**

- Bryan Cotton
- Daniel Durany
- Cynthia Rodriguez
- Theresa Moffitt
- Heather Crawford
- Guiyuan Li
- Amber Luckey
- Mike Anderson
- Sandy Rodriguo
- Ranella Franklin
- Joseph Barbarito
- Tammi Creed
- Stephanie Stone
- Rene Aguilar
- Deborah Norris
- Richard Garrett
- Audra Resell

- **Premier Partners:**

- Cook Children's Medical Center
- Fort Worth ISD (Founding Partner)
- Tarrant County, the office of Judge Tim O'Hare (Founding Partner)

- **Sponsor Member:**

- Green Oaks Education and Support

- **Professional Member**

- Macy Davis, Equitable Advisors, LLC

Your Name/Organization Belongs Here

www.IDDCouncil.org/join-us

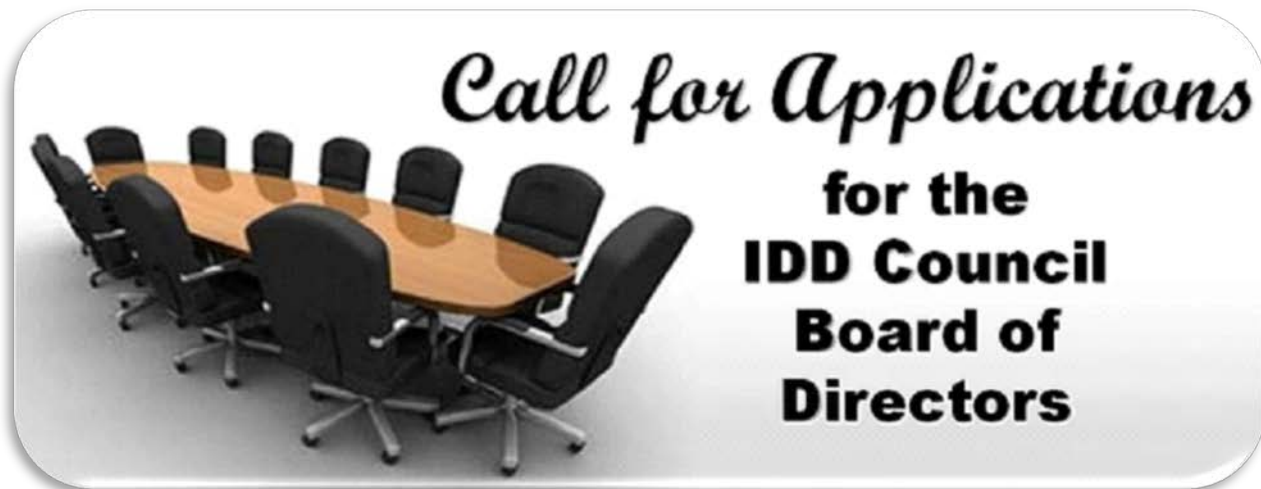


JOIN A COMMITTEE

- ❖ **COMMUNICATIONS & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE:** Identifies and schedules topics of interest for Council events and helps create and distribute information important to members of the Council and community through written and electronic media. Meets hybrid as needed.
- ❖ **SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE:** Calling all party planners, entertainers and creative thinkers! Let's plan programs that add value to the community, advocates and creates awareness of IDD. The committee is looking for parents, providers, community leaders and event planners to join us in finding and creating new opportunities. Meets hybrid as needed.
- ❖ **TRANSITION COMMITTEE:** Provides educators the opportunity to collaborate and discover resources to share with families in the path to adulthood. The committee is looking for school counselors, transition specialists, parents and advocates interested in establishing or advancing opportunities for people with disabilities after high school. Help develop strategies that support families and students in schools and secondary education. Meets the 2nd Friday of the month from 9-10:30 a.m.



Intellectual and
Developmental
Disabilities Council
of Tarrant County



The IDD Council is accepting applications from outstanding leaders, self-advocates and caregivers to serve as Board members. Help us to grow and prosper in our work.

<https://www.iddcouncil.org/board-member-info.>

ABOUT OUR PRESENTER

Katherine Lawrence, BCAS
Founder - Food Saved Me Institute



HEALTHY HABITS FOR PICKY EATERS

A Guide for Caretakers of Adults & Kids with Autism
or Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities



Katherine
Lawrence, BCAS



FOOD SAVED ME INSTITUTE (NON-PROFIT)



Online Nutrition Classes
Free Downloadables
Instructor Certifications

www.foodsavedme.institute



WELCOME

This class is not intended to serve as medical or specific nutritional advice.

You should always consult your doctor before making any major changes to your diet.



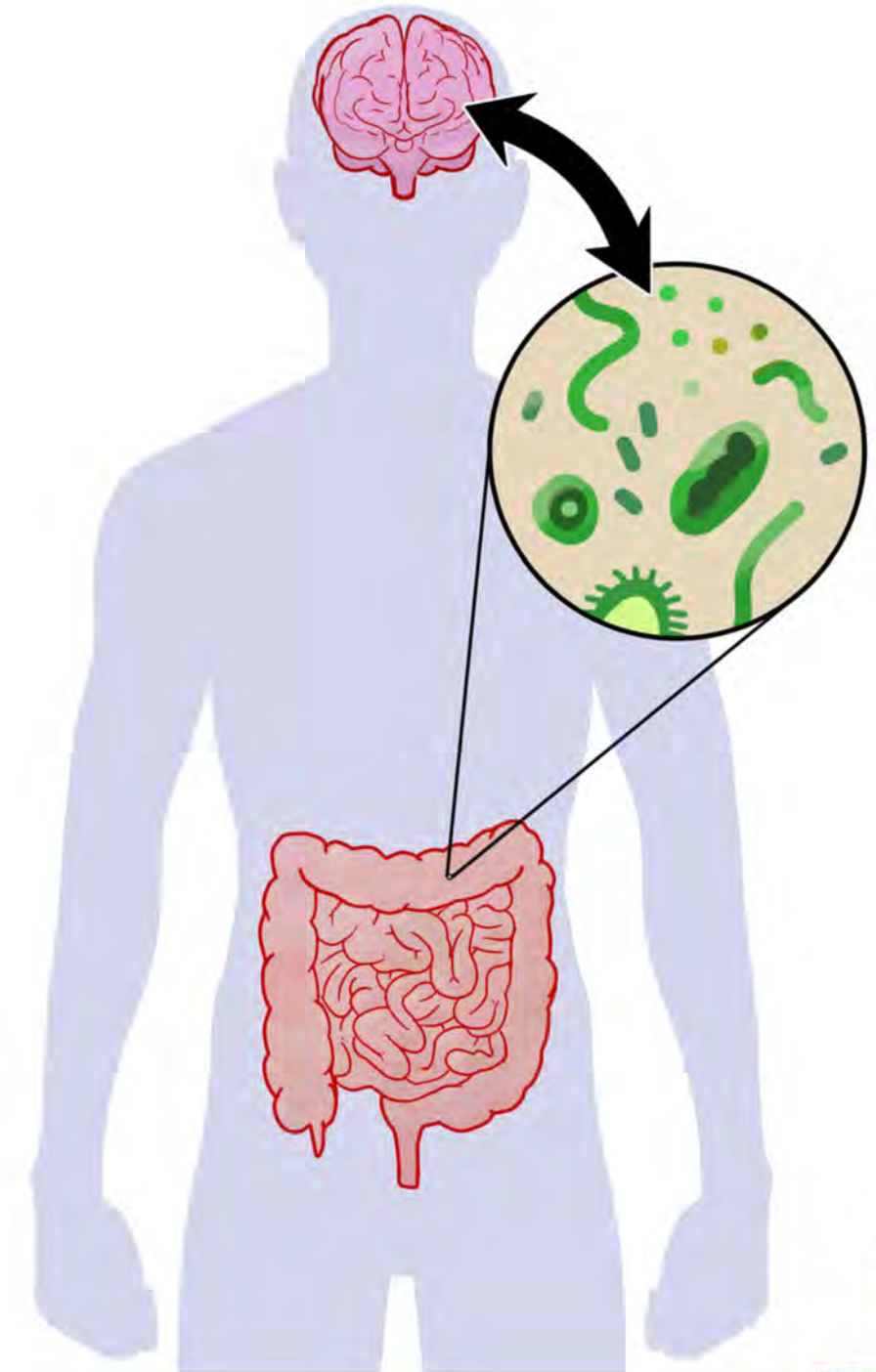
AGENDA

- Brief overview of why food strategies matter for people with autism, IDD and ADHD
- Understanding the root of picky eating
- Practical Food Strategies
- Real world tools and handouts



GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION/AXIS

- Signals travel between them through nerves, hormones, and chemicals produced by gut bacteria.
- 90% of our dopamine & 50% of serotonin is made in the gut
- An out-of-balance gut can cause:
 - more meltdowns
 - anxiety
 - focus-issues
 - self-regulation challenges



WHY FIBER?

- Fiber is the basis of building a healthy gut
- Supports the gut-brain connection crucial for mental health
- Fiber is found in plant foods:
 - Beans
 - Whole grains
 - Vegetables
 - Fruit



OMEGA-3S

Studies show that omega-3s (particularly EPA and DHA) are excellent for Autism & IDD Kids and adults:



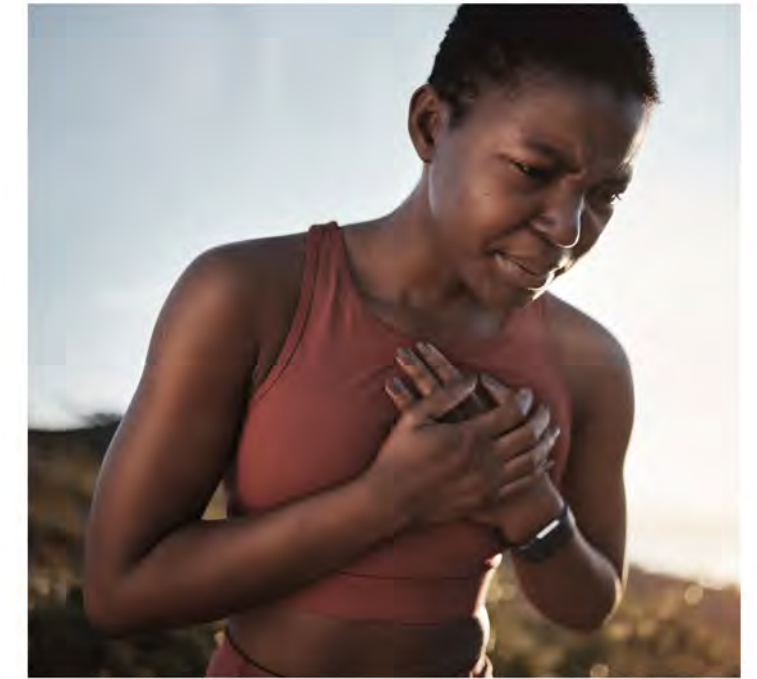
↑ Focus



⚡ Emotional Regulation



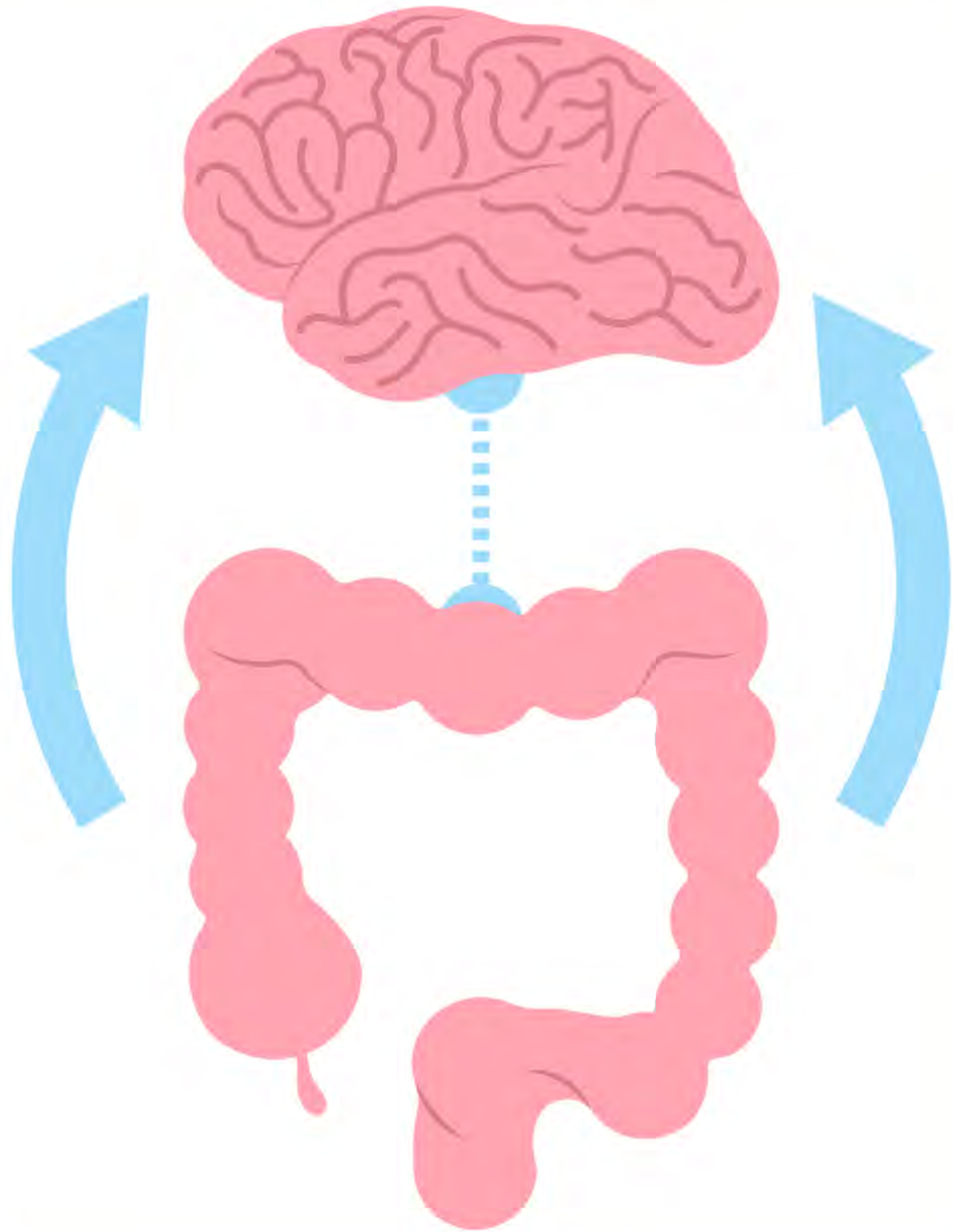
⚡ Hyper-activity



⚡ Long-term CVD Risks



OMEGA-3'S FOR GUT HEALTH



DHA & EPA:

- Calm inflammation in the digestive tract
- Promote healthier gut bacteria
- Reduce the Kind of systemic inflammation that can affect mood and behavior



OMEGA-3 SUPPLEMENTATION

ALA-rich foods: flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, soybeans, leafy greens

To avoid risk of rancidity, oxidation & absorption issues when supplementing:

- Microalgae oil
- 300mg DHA + 150mg EPA
 - optimal amount based on recent research



BERRIES ARE A SUPERFOOD

Berries contain
polyphenols
and anti-oxidants!

- calm brain inflammation
- support memory, learning and mood regulation



BERRIES ARE A SUPERFOOD

KATHERINE'S TEDx RECIPES
"Supportive Nutrition for Neurodivergent Children"

DIVERGENT DELIGHT SMOOTHIE

INGREDIENTS:
3 cups Water or non-dairy Milk
2 cups fresh or frozen Fruit
1 Banana
1 handful fresh Spinach or Kale
1 Tbsp Hemp Hearts
1 Tbsp Chia Seeds
1 Tbsp Flax Seeds
2-4 Tbsp Vanilla Protein Powder (optional)

METHOD:
Blend until smooth!

If you desire a sweeter taste, add a handful of grapes or 3-4 pitted dates.
Makes 5-6 cups.

MEXICAN QUINOA CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS:
3 Garlic cloves, minced
1 cup Quinoa
1 cup Salsa
1 ½ cups Water or Vegetable Broth
1 ½ cups Black Beans (15oz)
1 ½ cups Corn
1 ½ cups Fire-Roasted Diced Tomatoes
1 tsp Chili Powder
1 tsp Cumin
Salt, pepper or Adobo to taste
1 Avocado, diced

METHOD:
1. Heat 3qt skillet over medium-low heat and cook garlic with cover on, while prepping remaining ingredients.
2. Add remaining ingredients, except avocado, and stir well. Cover and cook over medium-high heat until it reaches a low boil. Reduce heat to low and cook for 10-15 minutes until quinoa is tender.
3. Stir in avocado chunks before serving.
Makes about 10 cups.

Inspired by the TEDx Talk by Katherine Lawrence, BCAS
Scan here to watch the video!

FOOD SAVED ME INSTITUTE

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FOODS TO SUPPORT AUTISM & IDD

- Fiber — from oats, beans, veggies, and fruit
- Omega-3s — from walnuts, chia, flax, or microalgae oil
- Berries — especially blueberries and strawberries, even frozen



IS PICKY EATING JUST DEFIANCE?

Common Factors:

- neurological
- sensory
- physical
- emotional



SENSORY SENSITIVITY

Sensory
Sensitivities

- texture
- temperature
- smell
- visual appearance,
- sound of chewing



ORAL, MOTOR OR SWALLOWING CHALLENGES

Children with developmental disabilities often have:

- low oral muscle tone
- poor chewing coordination,
- heightened gag reflex



SAMENESS & ROUTINE

A 2022 study found that “food neophobia” — the fear of new foods — is significantly more common in children with neurodevelopmental disorders, and that it correlates with both sensory sensitivity and anxiety levels (Lúcio et al., 2022).



ANXIETY, TRAUMA OR NEGATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

“Pressure or bribing can worsen fear responses in children with existing sensory or trauma-based food avoidance...”
(Silverman et al., 2020).



GASTROINTESTINAL (GI) DISCOMFORT

“Children with autism are significantly more likely to experience chronic constipation, reflux, or undiagnosed food intolerances like dairy or gluten sensitivity”
(Hsiao, 2014)



WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN THEIR LIMITED EATING?

Grace &
understanding is
important for them
and for us.



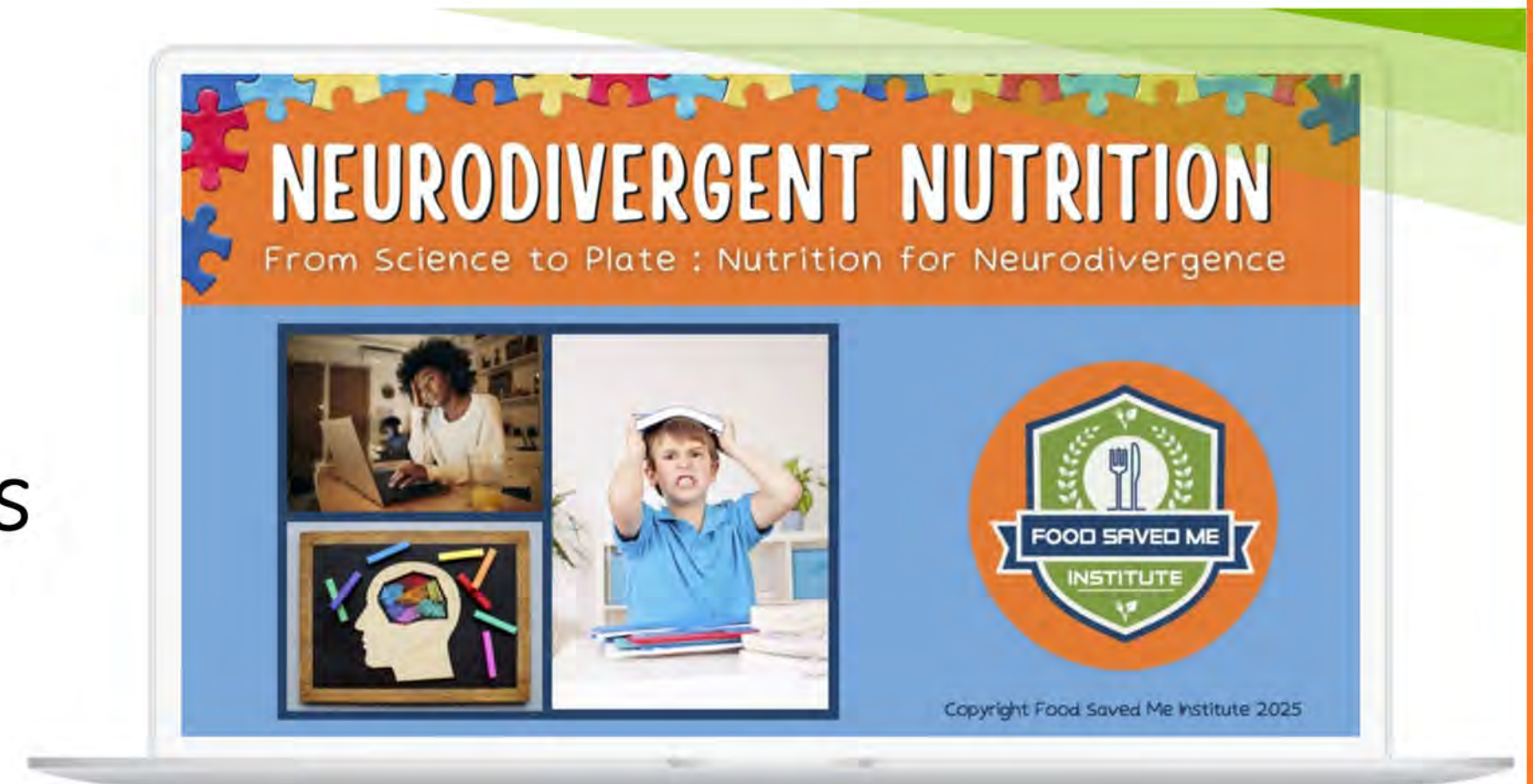
OFTEN “PICKY EATING” IS ACTUALLY:

- Sensory overload
- Chewing and swallowing difficulties
- Rigid routines and food fear
- GI pain they can't express
- And sometimes, just pure caregiver exhaustion



LEARN MORE ABOUT NEURODIVERGENT NUTRITION

- Common nutrient deficiencies
- The added risk of processed foods to IDD brains
- The difference for Females
- Lifestyle & environmental factors
- Detailed nutrition information
- Recipes & Cooking Demos



www.foodsavedme.institute



HOW DO I GET THEM TO EAT THIS???

10 Practical, Budget-Friendly Food Strategies



1. GENTLE EXPOSURE WITHOUT PRESSURE

Exposure = Just having a new food on the plate, or even on the table

Let them:

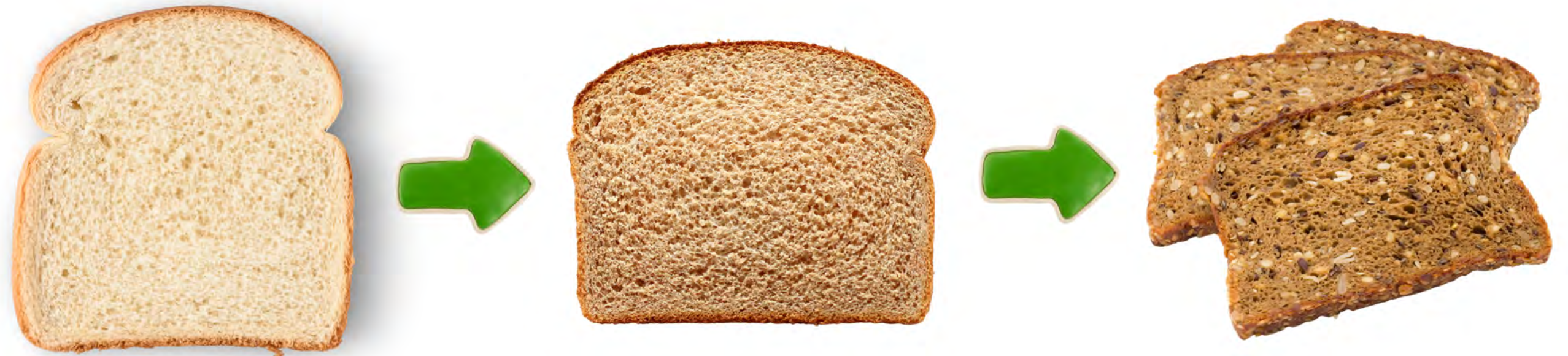
- See it
- Smell it
- Touch it



2. FOOD CHAINING

Always change just one thing at a time:

- Flavor
- Texture
- Brand
- Color



— not all of them.



3.TEXTURE & TEMPERATURE TWEAKS

Try changing:

- Crunchy to soft
- Cold to warm
- Whole to pureed
- Raw to cooked



4. VISUALS & ROUTINE



5. DIPS, SMOOTHIES, HIDDEN VEGGIES



6.EXPLORE & DISCUSS WITHOUT EATING



7. PAIR NEW WITH SAFE



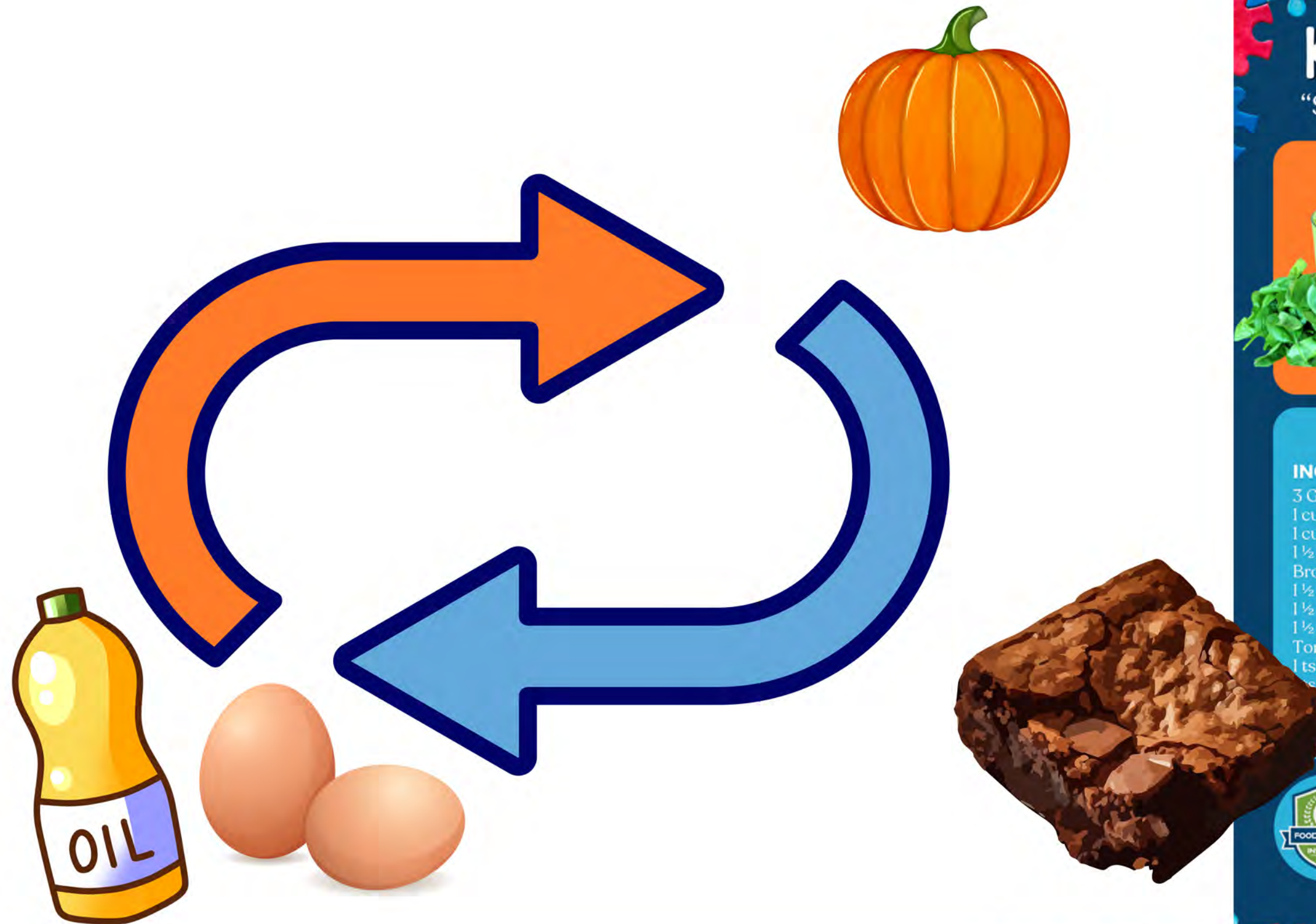
8. MEALTIME STRUCTURE



9.FUN & PLAYFUL



10.SENSORY-FRIENDLY SWAPS



KATHERINE'S TEDx RECIPES

"Supportive Nutrition for Neurodivergent Children"

DIVERGENT DELIGHT SMOOTHIE



INGREDIENTS:

3 cups Water or non-dairy Milk
2 cups fresh or frozen Fruit
1 Banana
1 handful fresh Spinach or Kale
1 Tbsp Hemp Hearts
1 Tbsp Chia Seeds
1 Tbsp Flax Seeds
2-4 Tbsp Vanilla Protein Powder (optional)

METHOD:

Blend until smooth!

If you desire a sweeter taste, add a handful of grapes or 3-4 pitted dates.
Makes 5-6 cups.

MEXICAN QUINOA CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS:

3 Garlic cloves, minced
1 cup Quinoa
1 cup Salsa
1 ½ cups Water or Vegetable Broth
1 ½ cups Black Beans (15oz)
1 ½ cups Corn
1 ½ cups Fire-Roasted Diced Tomatoes
1 tsp Chili Powder
1 tsp Cumin
1/2 cup pepper or Adobo to taste
1/2 cup avocado, diced

METHOD:

1. Heat 3qt skillet over medium-low heat and cook garlic with cover on, while prepping remaining ingredients.

2. Add remaining ingredients, except avocado, and stir well. Cover and cook over medium-high heat until it reaches a low boil. Reduce heat to low and cook for 10-15 minutes until quinoa is tender.

3. Stir in avocado chunks before serving.

Makes about 10 cups.



Inspired by the TEDx Talk by Katherine Lawrence, BCAS

Scan here to watch the video!



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FREE DOWNLOADABLES



Tips for Picky Eaters

TIPS FOR PICKY EATERS

- 8. Respect Their Appetite**
Allow children to decide how much to eat. Forcing them to finish everything on their plate may create negative associations with food.
- 9. Be Creative with Names**
Give foods fun and appealing names. "Broccoli Trees" or "Superpower Carrots" might sound more exciting to a child.
- 10. Set a Routine**
Establish regular meal and snack times. Predictable eating schedules can help children feel secure and more willing to try new foods.
- 11. Limit Sugary Snacks and Drinks**
Sugary foods and drinks can reduce appetite for healthier foods. Limit these items, especially close to mealtimes.
- 12. Offer Choices**
Allow children to have some control over their meals by offering limited choices. For example, ask if they want apples or oranges, or pasta with tomato sauce or pesto.
- 13. Be Patient**
Picky eating is often a phase that children outgrow. Stay patient and avoid power struggles over food. Encourage, but don't force.
- 14. Seek Professional Help if Needed**
If picky eating significantly impacts a child's health or quality of life, consider consulting a pediatrician or a registered dietitian for personalized guidance and support.

REMEMBER THAT EVERY CHILD IS DIFFERENT, AND WHAT WORKS FOR ONE MAY NOT WORK FOR ANOTHER. BE ADAPTABLE. KEEP OFFERING A VARIETY OF FOODS, AND CELEBRATE SMALL VICTORIES WHEN YOUR CHILD TRIES SOMETHING NEW!

Check out our online nutrition & cooking courses
www.foodsavedme.institute
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PICKY EATERS

CHILDREN IS COMMON, AND DEALING WITH PICKY EATING REQUIRES PATIENCE AND CREATIVITY. PARENTS HANDLE PICKY EATERS:

Role Model
Children learn by example. If they see you enjoying a variety of foods, they are more likely to try new things.

Stinky Soups
Strong textures can turn off kids. Blending soups is all of the nutrients and flavor, while making the texture more palatable.

3. Offer a Variety of Foods
Present a wide range of foods, including different colors, textures, and tastes. Encourage trying at least one bite of everything on their plate.

4. Involve Kids in Meal Preparation
Allow children to participate in age-appropriate cooking tasks. When they help prepare a meal, they may be more willing to try what they've made.

5. Make Food Fun
Create fun and visually appealing dishes. Use cookie cutters to shape sandwiches, arrange fruits and vegetables into smiley faces, or create food art to make meals more engaging.

6. Introduce New Foods
Gradually introduce new foods one at a time. Offer a new food alongside familiar favorites. Avoid overwhelming them with too many new items at once.

7. Offer Dips and Sauces
Children often enjoy dipping foods. Offer healthy dips like hummus or guacamole to make vegetables or fruits more appealing.

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www.foodsavedme.institute
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Tips for Saving on Food Costs

Tips for Saving on Food Purchase & Prep

- Frozen Fruits & Vegetables**
Opt for frozen varieties, especially when your favorite fruits & vegetables are out of season. Frozen produce is often cheaper, has a longer shelf life, and reduces waste since it doesn't spoil quickly. Buy in bulk during sales.
- Meal Planning**
Plan meals for the week based on seasonal produce & store specials. Create versatile recipes to use ingredients across multiple meals. This reduces the chances of impulse purchases & wasted items. For example, cooking brown rice that can be used in both a stir-fry or with chili.
- Whole Grains**
Buy whole grains in bulk, such as brown rice, quinoa, or oats. Purchase store-brand options, which are usually cheaper. Cook in batches & store leftovers for future meals to minimize cooking time & energy. Freeze leftovers in 1 cup batches, for easy use in recipes later.
- Dry Legumes**
Buy dried beans, peas & lentils in bulk. They are cost-effective & cooking in large batches can save time & money. Soak & cook them yourself instead of buying canned varieties. Cooked legumes can be stored in the freezer in a plastic bag for up to 6 months. Store in 1 to 2 cup batches, as that is the quantity in 1 can, commonly called for in recipes.
- Buying in Bulk**
Purchase non-perishable items like grains, pasta, nuts, & seeds in bulk. This reduces the cost per unit and saves money in the long run. Ensure proper storage to prevent spoilage.
- Experiment Making Plant Milks**
Homemade versions are often cheaper and free from additives. Look for store specials on bulk purchases of nuts or oats for making these alternatives. Milks are easy to make at home & usually involve very few steps.
- Reducing Food Waste**
Plan your meals for the week and create a shopping list. Buy only what you need & use perishables first. Repurpose leftovers creatively to avoid waste. Consider freezing leftover soups, stews, and sauces in portion-sized containers for future meals.
- Root Vegetables**
Root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, and beets are usually inexpensive & have a long shelf life. They can be used in various dishes, making them versatile & budget-friendly choices.
- DIY Convenience Foods**
Buy whole fruits, vegetables & bulk items. Instead of pre-packaged salads, make your own by buying lettuce, carrots, etc. separately. Prepping ingredients at home can save a significant amount of money in the long term.
- Freezing Fresh Produce**
Freeze excess fresh fruits and vegetables. Wash, chop, and freeze them in portion-sized bags. Frozen produce retains its nutrients and can be used in smoothies, soups, and stir-fries.

How to Get Your Kids to Eat More Leafy Greens

How to Get Your Kids to Eat Leafy Greens Every Day

5. Hide greens in sauces & soups
Puree greens and add them to tomato-based sauces, stews, or soups. This works well with dishes like spaghetti, lasagna, or minestrone. Start by blending a small amount and gradually increase as your child becomes accustomed to it.

6. Make "chips" out of leafy greens
Toss kale, collard greens or swiss chard with a small amount of apple cider vinegar. Add salt, paprika and nutritional yeast for flavoring. Rub seasoning into greens well. Bake at 300 degrees for 20-30 minutes until greens are crispy.

How to Get Your Kids to Eat Leafy Greens Every Day

7. Turn greens into dip
Blend cooked spinach or kale into hummus or nutrient-packed dip. Pair with colorful veggie sticks or grain crackers for a snack or side dish.

Leafy greens are loaded with:

- ✓ calcium
- ✓ fiber
- ✓ folate
- ✓ magnesium
- ✓ potassium
- ✓ vitamins A, E

1. Blend them into smoothies
Add a handful of baby spinach or kale to your child's favorite fruit smoothie. Pair it with sweet fruits like bananas, mango, or berries to mask the taste. Start with small amounts and gradually increase as your child gets used to it.

2. Make green popsicles
Blend greens like spinach or Swiss chard with fruits like pineapple, apple, and a bit of coconut water. Pour the mixture into popsicle molds and freeze. Bonus: Add a few chia seeds or ground flaxseed for an extra nutrient boost.

3. Add greens to baked goods
Incorporate pureed spinach, zucchini, or even avocado into baked goods like brownies, muffins, or pancakes. Use cocoa powder or dark chocolate chips to mask the color if needed.

4. Make green pesto pasta
Blend spinach, basil, or kale with olive oil, garlic, and a handful of nuts to create a vibrant green pesto sauce. Toss it with whole grain or legume pasta for a colorful, nutrient-dense meal. You can call it "green monster pasta" or "superhero sauce" to add excitement!

WWW.FOODSAVEDME.INSTITUTE

RESOURCES

Neurodivergent
Nutrition
Masterclass (online)



info@fsm.institute



TEDx Talk "Supportive
Nutrition for
Neurodivergent Children"





Intellectual and
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Disabilities Council
of Tarrant County



Register for webinar link:
www.IDDCouncil.org



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Caregiver Education Webinar Series Presents:

High Quality IEPs

SEPT 4, 2025 📅 12:00 pm — 1:30 pm

Join us as we explore the process of creating high-quality IEPs in accordance with the IDEA requirements, considering the Supreme Court's decision in the Endrew F. case. We will emphasize the development of a high-quality IEP tailored to each student's unique needs, the components of an effective PLAAFP statement, and the creation of challenging, ambitious, and measurable goals. Additionally, we will discuss the significance of tracking a student's progress toward achieving their IEP goals and the school's responsibility to report this progress to parents.

Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8x6d89>

PRESENTED BY

Christy Balraj, is a Regional Coordinator for Partners Resource Network (PRN), a non-profit agency that operates the Texas statewide network of Parent Training and Information Centers serving parents of children and youth with disabilities ages of 0-26 as well as youth self-advocates ages 14-26. As the Region 11 Coordinator, Christy helps parents and caregivers understand their child's disability, their rights and responsibilities under IDEA, helps obtain and evaluate resources and services for their child, and can participate as a team member with professionals in planning services for their child. Christy is a retired educator, school principal, and CASA volunteer.





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SHOP, EAT AND SUPPORT THE IDD COUNCIL



Kroger Shopper Card Community Rewards: <https://bit.ly/2Sw9WX1>

Rosa's Cards \$20 value / \$20 each: Email request with Qty: Rita@IDDCouncil.org

More info and ways to support our mission: <https://www.iddcouncil.org/partners>

PAYMENTS MADE EASY WITH ZELLE, PAYPAL, OR ON OUR WEBSITE!



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(www.IDDCouncil.org/gift)



Intellectual and
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of Tarrant County

Thank you for joining us!

Rita Stevenson
Executive Director
Rita@IDDCouncil.org
www.IDDCouncil.org