

THErapy MEALS

STARTING ROUTINE

1. Sensory exercise – obstacle course (in gyms; at home)
2. Come to the table and blow bubbles
3. Child is given “table bubbles”
4. Child is given a wet washcloth to wash hands
5. Child puts washcloth on back of chair
6. Drying towel is passed/pushed from person to person
7. Child is given a white paper plate and white paper napkin

FEEDING

1. Show Child the first food and describe physical properties
2. Demonstrate an action you think the Child can do easily and one step higher
3. Pass Child the first food and let them help themselves
4. Move through the sequence of Steps to Eating, as high as Child can move
5. Child is positively reinforced for ALL levels of food interaction (imitation, touch, praise, comments, clap, cheer)
6. Make it FUN! Do not force the child to eat.
7. Move on to the next food and repeat Feeding steps 1-6
8. Offer the drink last

CLEAN UP ROUTINE

1. When all the foods and the drink have been presented, tell Child "all done", "snack is over", "time to clean up now"
2. Model for Child, blowing at least one piece of each food presented at that meal, into the trash (they can throw a food if needed)
3. Child pushes the rest of the food into the trash
4. Give Child a small sponge to help wash the table
5. Child washes their hands with their washcloth, and then dries hands by pushing the drying towel from one person to the next

PROGRAM STEPS

1. Begin with one Therapy Meal a week, and each week add another Therapy Meal until you are completing at least one Therapy Meal per day. Replicate the Routine described above. Choose your Child's worst eating meal, because the GOAL at Therapy Meals is SKILL DEVELOPMENT-NOT VOLUME. Don't do a Therapy Meal at your Child's best volume meal of the day.
2. When presenting the foods, follow your "Steps to Eating" handout very closely. Complete each step in order, unless your Child spontaneously advances to the next step him or herself.
3. **MAKE SURE YOU POSITIVELY REINFORCE EACH STEP THAT IS ACCOMPLISHED.** Gear the reinforcement to match the accomplishment and your child. For example, if your child usually interacts with the food okay by serving themselves, you can still reward this by making a comment such as "oh look, you're helping yourself". However, if your child has never touched a food directly before and does so, you should increase the praise such as "good job picking up that Cheeto". Control your voice volume and emotions so that your child feels pleased/praised but not overly distracted.
4. You should be eating with your Child and using your modeling as a way to encourage interaction at the next level. Also, talk to your Child about food properties such as taste, color, texture, temp.
5. If your Child will not advance to the next step, first try a new way to accomplish the same goal. For example, touching to the lips can be done by encouraging imitation of kissing a food.
6. After three failures of step 5, go back to the last successful step and repeat your request/modeling. Reinforce that step if completed and introduce a new food or begin clean up routine.