



All you ever wanted to know about

# Picky Eating

nourish  
the little's

# About



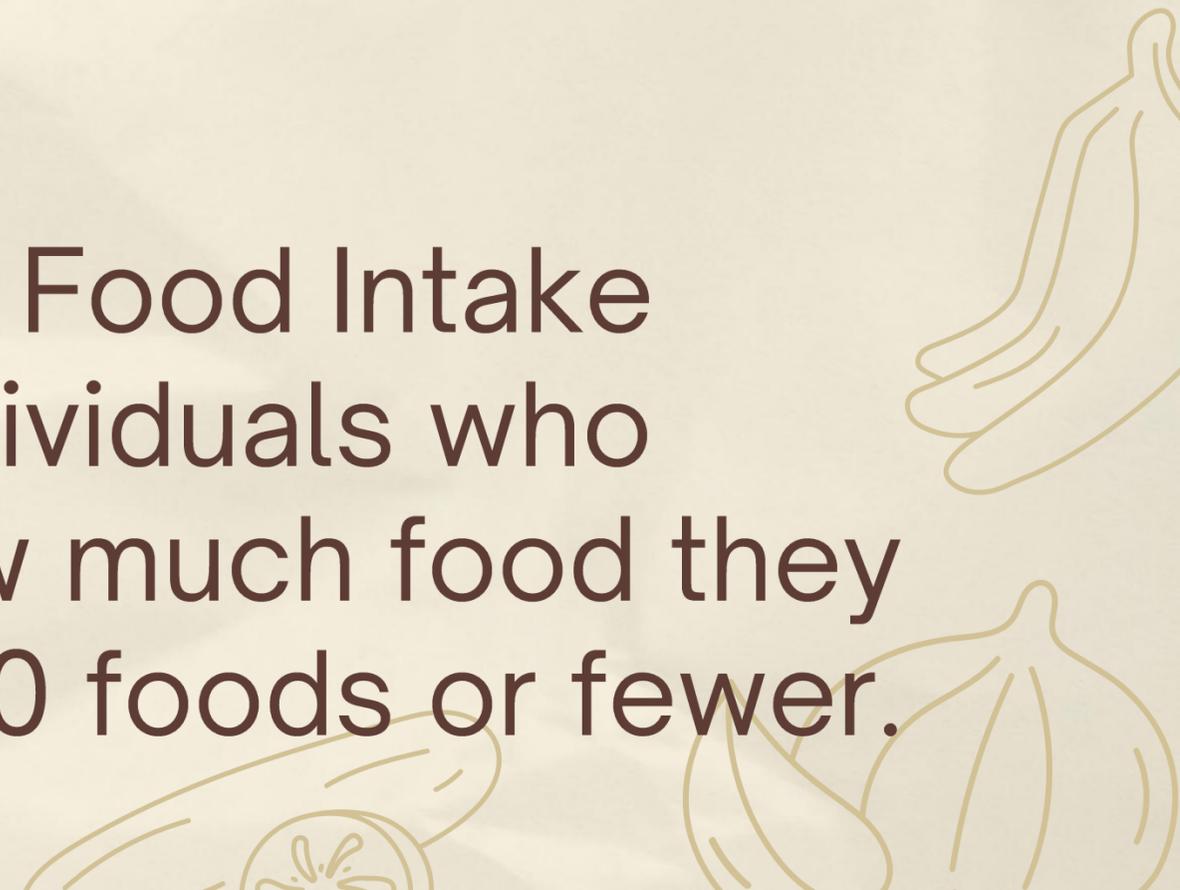
- Christine Muldoon M.ed, FNTF
- Former early childhood educator
- Creator of Nourish the Littles: online platform that offers nutrition education and resources for parents.
- Avid cook, adventurous eater, lover of all seafood

nourish  
the littles



# What IS picky eating?

- 1 Very careful about choosing or accepting things. "Fussy," "choosy"
- 2 "Picky eaters" are characterized as unwilling to accept new foods and even familiar foods, as well as having strong food preferences.
- 3 Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID): Individuals who severely restrict how much food they eat, approximately 10 foods or fewer.





# What IS picky eating?

- 4 Parent's definition of picky eating:  
“My child won't eat vegetables or  
healthy foods.”
- 5 Picky eating is developmentally  
appropriate between the ages of 24  
months to 4 years old.

- Mascola AJ, Bryson SW, Agras WS. Picky eating during childhood: a longitudinal study to age 11 years. *Eat Behav.* 2010 Dec;11(4):253-7. doi: 10.1016/j.eatbeh.2010.05.006. Epub 2010 May 27. PMID: 20850060; PMCID: PMC2943861.
- Chilman L, Kennedy-Behr A, Frakking T, Swanepoel L, Verdonck M. Picky Eating in Children: A Scoping Review to Examine Its Intrinsic and Extrinsic Features and How They Relate to Identification. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.* 2021; 18(17):9067. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18179067>



# What CAUSES picky eating?



- 1 Emotional/Relationships
- 2 Sensory Problems
- 3 Oral Motor Development
- 4 Health
- 5 Delayed Solids Introduction



# What CAUSES picky eating?

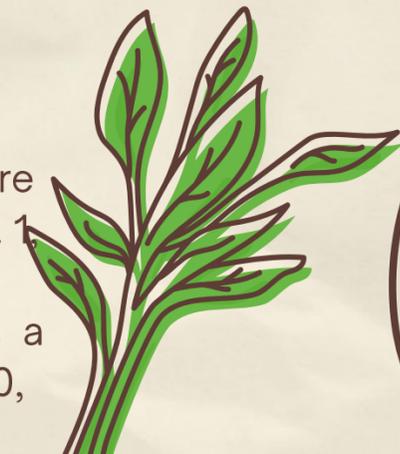
## 1 Emotional/Relationships

- Changes at home, school, or with friends or family
- Tension between parent+child or parent+parent
- Type of attachment to caregivers

• M. M. Black and F. E. Aboud, "Responsive Feeding Is Embedded in a Theoretical Framework of Responsive Parenting," *J. Nutr.*, vol. 141, no. 3, pp. 490–494, Mar. 2011.

• M. Finnane, E. Jansen, K. M. Mallan, and L. A. Daniels, "Mealtime Structure and Responsive Feeding Practices Are Associated With Less Food Fussiness and More Food Enjoyment in Children," *J. Nutr. Educ. Behav.*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 11-18.e1, Jan. 2017.

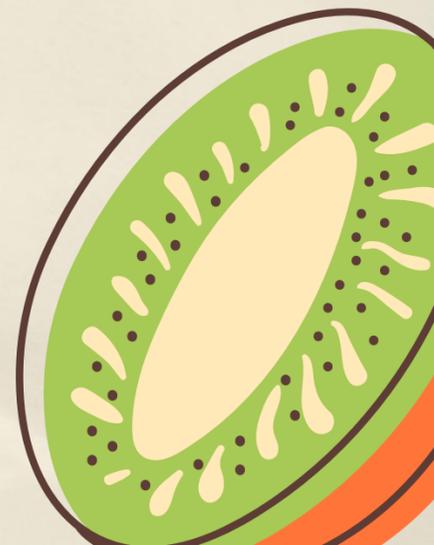
3.S. Iwinski, N. C. Cole, J. A. Saltzman, S. Donovan, Soo-Yeun Lee, B. Fiese, K. Bost, Child attachment behavior as a moderator of the relation between feeding responsiveness and picky eating behavior, *Eating Behaviors*, Volume 40, 2021,



# What CAUSES picky eating?

## 2 Sensory Needs

- Overstimulation
- Understimulation
- Sensory Processing Disorders



# What CAUSES picky eating?

- 3 Oral Motor Development
  - Reflexes not integrated
  - Insufficient practice
  - Poor oral motor function
  - Oral ties
  - Aphasia/Speech Concerns
  - Dysphagia



# What CAUSES picky eating?

## 4 Health

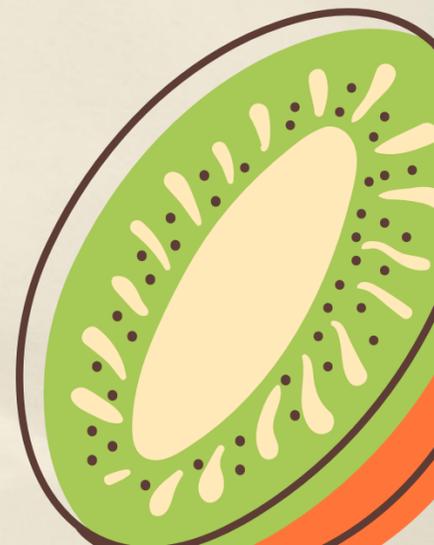
- Nutritional deficiencies/mineral imbalances
- Lack of, or limited stomach acid
- Gut dysbiosis
- Leaky gut
- Heavy metal toxicity

1. Minerals Balance: Dysfunction: retrieved from, [https://nutritionaltherapy.instructure.com/courses/155/pages/2-dot-4-%7C-mineral-balance-module-materials?module\\_item\\_id=3972](https://nutritionaltherapy.instructure.com/courses/155/pages/2-dot-4-%7C-mineral-balance-module-materials?module_item_id=3972)
2. Digestion, Dysfunction: retrieved from, [https://nutritionaltherapy.instructure.com/courses/155/pages/2-dot-1-%7C-digestion-module-materials?module\\_item\\_id=3969](https://nutritionaltherapy.instructure.com/courses/155/pages/2-dot-1-%7C-digestion-module-materials?module_item_id=3969)



# What CAUSES picky eating?

- 5 Delayed Solids Introduction
  - Missed opportunities for exposure to flavor and/or texture
  - Oral motor deficits
  - Reflexes not integrated





The exact same methods  
that are used for  
**PREVENTING** picky eating  
are also used for  
**REVERSING** picky eating.



# Preventing picky eating in babies and toddlers

- 1 4 Pillars
- 2 Division of Responsibility
- 3 Flavor and Texture Windows
- 4 Benefits of BLW
- 5 Importance of nutrient-dense foods and  
variability of foods



# 4 Pillars of Preventing and Reversing Picky Eating

- Provide diverse sensory experiences
- Provide opportunities to develop oral motor skills
- Use positive relationships and secure attachment
- Introduce solids in a timely way





# Division of Responsibility

Caregivers are responsible for:  
WHAT, WHEN, AND WHERE

Children are responsible for:  
HOW MUCH and WHETHER





# Division of Responsibility

Caregivers are responsible for:

- Shopping, cooking, preparing the food
- Providing consistent meals and snacks
- Model table manners and eating skills
- Be understanding and patient. Our kids are still learning feeding skills



# Division of Responsibility

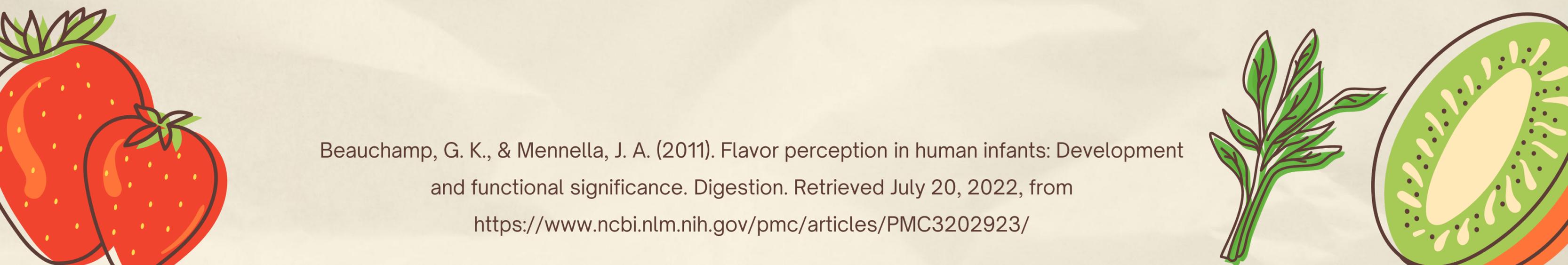
Children are responsible for:

- Eating, if they choose to
  - Eating the amount that is appropriate for their bodies (intuitive eating)
  - Eat the same foods their caregivers eat
  - Learn appropriate table manners
- 



# Flavor and Texture Windows

- flavor window: 4-6 months
- texture window: 6-10 months

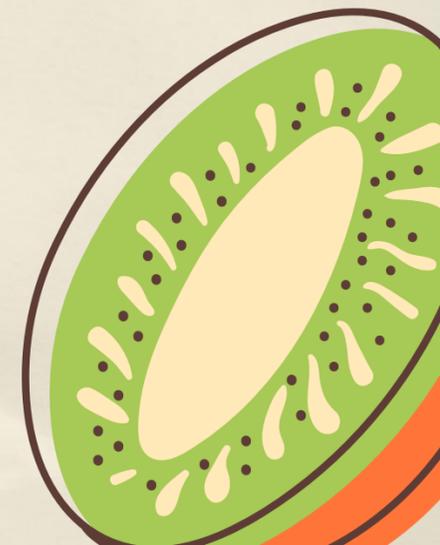


Beauchamp, G. K., & Mennella, J. A. (2011). Flavor perception in human infants: Development and functional significance. *Digestion*. Retrieved July 20, 2022, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3202923/>



# Benefits of BLW

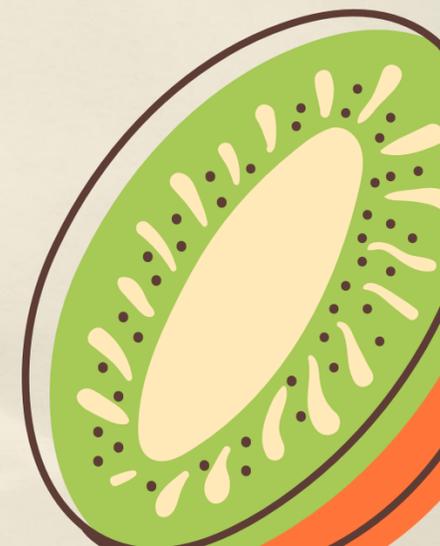
- oral motor development
- chewing practice
- sensory input





# Importance of Nutrient-Dense Foods & Variety

- bone broth/meat stocks
- ferments
- organ meats
- meats, seafood
- animal fats





# 10 Mistakes That Can Lead To Negative Food Associations

- Constantly wiping baby's face and hands during the meal.
- Making negative comments about how much food you or your child ate.
- Having the child eat alone or away from you at the table.
- Praising the child for taking another bite.
- Encouraging or forcing a child to eat while they are sick or teething.





# 10 Mistakes That Can Lead To Negative Food Associations

- Encouraging a child to eat after they have indicated they are finished eating.
- Yelling or arguing with other family members at the table.
- Tricking a child into opening their mouth.
- Putting your fingers in the child's mouth to pull food out.
- Using food as a reward.



# Reversing Picky Eating

- 1** Establish a mealtime routine
  - sitting at a table
  - no electronics
  - create a rhythm
  - focus on connection
- 2** Establish a mealtime schedule
  - avoid grazing all day
  - refrain from snacking right before a meal
  - hungry children EAT!
  - create consistent meal times



# Reversing Picky Eating

3

Constant exposure, constant exposure, constant exposure. Research shows that kids need 15-20 exposures to a food before they will begin to accept it. Parents give up after 3-5x of offering.

4

Difference between:

- familiar foods
- learning foods
- safe foods

1. Paul Dazeley, Carmel Houston-Price, Exposure to foods' non-taste sensory properties. A nursery intervention to increase children's willingness to try fruit and vegetables, *Appetite*, Volume 84, 2015, Pages 1-6,

2. Holley CE, Farrow C, Haycraft E. A systematic review of methods for increasing vegetable consumption in early childhood. *Curr Nutr Rep.* 2017;6:157-70.

3. Holley CE, Farrow C, Haycraft E. If at first you don't succeed: assessing influences associated with mothers' reoffering of vegetables to preschool age children. *Appetite.* 2018;123:249-55.

4. Zajonc RB. Attitudinal effects of mere exposure. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1968;9:1-27.

5. Carruth BR, Ziegler P, Gordon A, Barr SI. Prevalence of Picky Eaters among Infants and Toddlers and their Caregiver's Decisions about Offering a Food. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association.* 2004;104:S57-S64.

# Reversing Picky Eating

- 5 Constant exposure paired with variability. Instead of just serving raw carrots, serve roasted carrots, mashed carrots, carrots in a stew, carrots in a soup, etc.



1. Paul Dazeley, Carmel Houston-Price, Exposure to foods' non-taste sensory properties. A nursery intervention to increase children's willingness to try fruit and vegetables, *Appetite*, Volume 84, 2015, Pages 1-6,

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# Reversing Picky Eating

- 6 Refrain from negatively labeling children, especially repeating this label in front of them.
- 7 Avoid pressuring, coaxing, bribing, or threatening to eat foods. Focus on positive relationships and attachment. Shame and guilt put the nervous system in a “freeze” state, we cannot eat when we are not regulated and the body is in a sympathetic state.

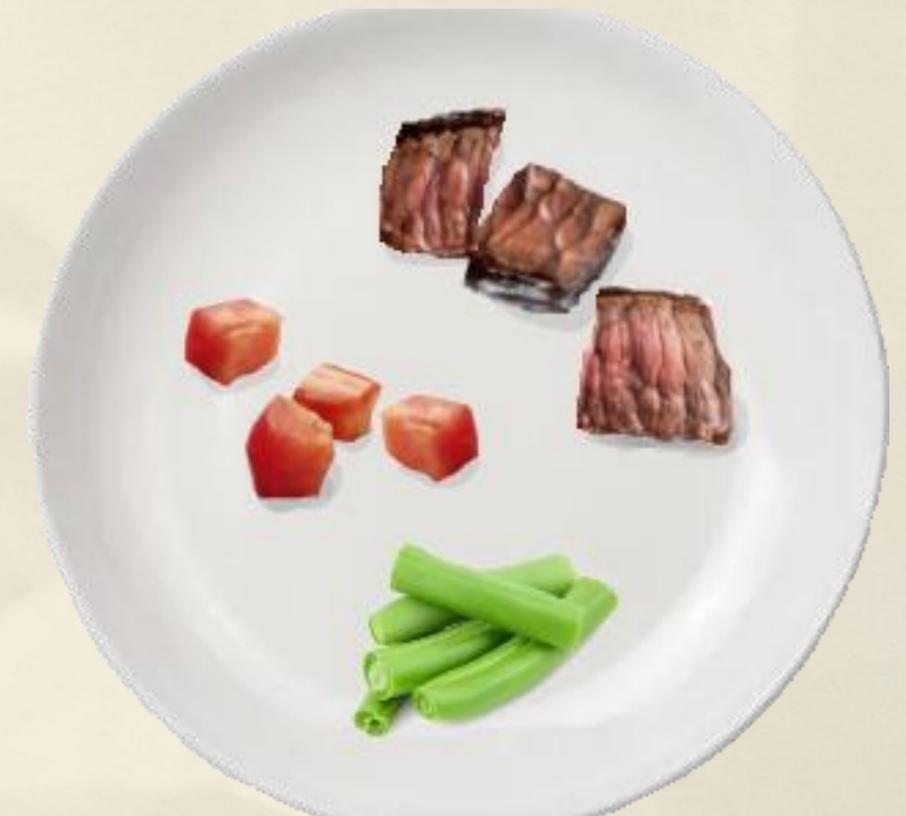
1. Jansen PW, Derks IPM, Mou Y, van Rijen EHM, Gaillard R, Micali N, Voortman T, Hillegers MHJ. Associations of parents' use of food as reward with children's eating behaviour and BMI in a population-based cohort. *Pediatr Obes.* 2020 Nov;15(11):e12662. doi: 10.1111/ijpo.12662. Epub 2020 Jun 16. PMID: 32548949; PMCID: PMC7583369.

2. Johnson SL. Developmental and Environmental Influences on Young Children's Vegetable Preferences and Consumption. *Adv Nutr.* 2016 Jan 15;7(1):220S-231S. doi: 10.3945/an.115.008706. PMID: 26773030; PMCID: PMC4717879.

# Reversing Picky Eating

- 8 Avoid being a short order cook! Everyone eats the same meal, no meal is different.
  - o Meal variations can be made based on healing protocols or severe picky eating.

- 9 Serve small portions of food. Full plates can look overwhelming to children and create more food waste.





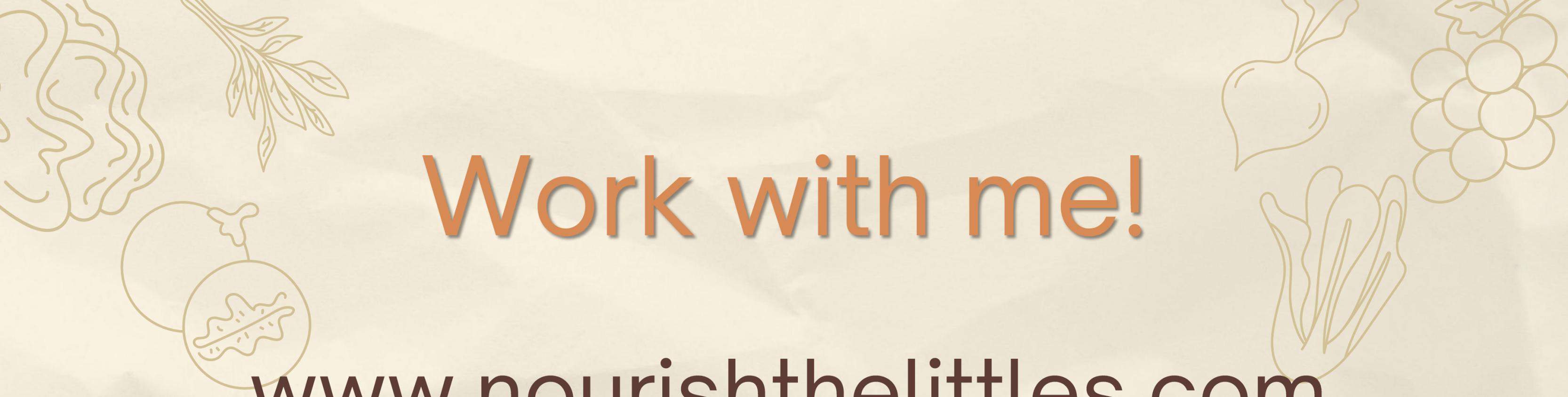
# Reversing Picky Eating

- 10** Avoid packaged foods and foods with excessive sugar. These foods can trick your child's palate into craving more and thinking that is what real food looks and tastes like.
- 11** Model, model, model! Model eating real, whole foods at mealtimes.
- 12** Avoid kid menus at restaurants. Kid menu food is not real food!

# Summary of Reversing Picky Eating

1. Start with establishing a consistent mealtime routine.
2. Establish a consistent mealtime schedule (limit snacks).
3. Work on slowly introducing foods—consistent exposure paired with variability.
4. Follow the Division of Responsibility.
5. Reduce and eliminate all processed foods as much as possible.





**Work with me!**

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# Questions & Answers