

IMPORTANT 1st SESSION THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SOS FEEDING THERAPY

1. When children need Feeding Therapy, it is because they have not been able to learn how to eat well. This means that our jobs as adults in their lives is to teach them how to eat better.

If we come to the table with this mindset of being Teachers, then we can also see that ...

- every **mealtime** is CLASS,
- your **child** is the STUDENT, and
- **food** is your SUBJECT.

2. Think about the best Teachers and Professors you have had in your life. Were they the strict disciplinarians who assigned you readings while they sat off to the side and did other work? OR, were they the teachers who directly engaged with you, showing you how to solve the problems, who made the subject interesting and who helped everyone have fun while they were learning? What type of Professor do you want to be?
3. Because you are the Professor at mealtimes, we need you to show up to class! This means sitting down and eating WITH your child. No electronics, no cooking the rest of the meal, no readings books/news, no problem-solving everything that went wrong today. We need you to focus on teaching your child to eat by being the best role model you can, by showing them the correct ways to eat different foods and helping them to learn how to do the task in small enough steps that they can master the necessary skills themselves.
4. It also means coming into the Feeding Therapy sessions with your child. My job as your Therapist is to help you learn to be the best teacher for your child. **How fast your child progresses depends on you and your teaching** (and you doing your homework). Feeding is a two-way street that involves BOTH you AND your child. BOTH of you are in Feeding Therapy together.
 - In our first sessions together, please focus on what I am doing and imitate me vs focusing on what your child is or is not doing. Remember, you are learning to be a Professor.
 - As your child and you progress, you will be taking over more of the teaching in the sessions with my guidance.
5. At first, your child may eat better here at our Clinic and for me. This is because all I do with your child is eat with them. I become a Cue-to-Eating. You are a cue for lots and lots of other activities. As you are able to do more of the teaching in our sessions, you will also become a Cue-for-Eating that will carry over into your home.
6. The foods that your child is currently eating are those that they have learned are easiest for their body to manage given their skill deficits. Often, these are not the foods we as Parents/Caregivers want our children to be eating. However, these foods serve an important purpose = these are the foods that keep your child GROWING while we are teaching them new skills. AND these foods are the STEPPING STONES that we will be using to teach your child, over time, how to eat the healthier foods we want them to eat.

- We may choose low nutrition foods on purpose in SOS Feeding Therapy because we need to start each session successfully with those easy STEPPING STONE FOODS.
- Watch carefully how we link these lower nutrition foods across a Feeding Therapy Session to higher nutrition foods that are harder to eat. This is called “building a Food Hierarchy” and you will be learning how to do this over time.
- If your child eats a new food in a Feeding Therapy session for the very first time, don’t expect them to just go home and eat that food right away at home. They likely ate that food because of the Food Hierarchy and the therapy play that we did in the session.
- To practice with this food at home, consider having 2 courses to one of your meals and present this Learning Food during the second course. Hopefully, they will be more relaxed when the second course comes out and may be more open to trying their Learning Food at home. Make sure the Learning Food is the EXACT same one we need in Therapy (texture, flavor, how it is prepared, brand, etc.).

7. In our first 3 Therapy Sessions together, we want your child to learn:

- The Therapy Routine,
- To feel safe and know no one is going to force them to eat if they are not ready yet,
- To build a positive working relationship, and
- To have FUN

It is OK in the first 3 Therapy Sessions for your child to not eat anything at all, or to only eat their favorite foods. Eating is not our focus in these first 3 sessions. LEARNING the four things listed above is our focus.

COME JOIN US IN HAVING FUN LEARNING ABOUT NEW FOODS!!