



Feeding Your Child with Autism: A Family-Centered Guide to Meeting the Challenges (Topics in Autism)

Mark J. Palmieri, Kristen M. Powers

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Feeding disorders challenge many children with autism, leading to tantrums, food aversions or refusal, or rituals. These behaviors are part of larger autism symptoms such as escape and avoidance tendencies, oral-motor deficits, and sensory issues. Left unchecked, they can threaten an individual's health and functioning, and overwhelm family life.

Feeding Your Child with Autism thoroughly discusses feeding disorders in children and explains the types of supports families can use at home, as well as what professional help they should consider. The authors, experts in feeding issues and disorders, stress that regardless of the type of behavior exhibited, it's important to identify the underlying root cause and tailor a treatment plan using ABA methods.

The book recommends a community-based, family-centered team approach in which behavior analysts, psychologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, nutritionists, educators, and families work collaboratively during this two-part process:

Assessment begins with data collection from:

-Oral-motor assessment: looking at feeding history; postural stability to maintain an upright position while eating; stamina; tolerance of smells, tastes, textures & temperatures; oral-motor structure and function; self-feeding skills.

-Behavioral assessment: function-based examination of each problem behavior to systematically determine what the behavior achieves for the child (e.g., avoids challenging motor tasks or unpleasant textures, or gains access to preferred foods).

Treatment begins with using assessment data to develop and execute a therapeutic plan:

-teaching prerequisite skills to the child in the context of sharing a meal (sitting briefly at the table and taking one bite)

-adding more complex feeding behaviors (new foods, reintroducing textures) to the repertoire

-improving oral-motor functioning

-showing families and school teams how to generalize feeding skills across a variety of settings

-setting the stage for long-term healthy eating

Feeding Your Child with Autism is full of insightful case studies and proven problem-solving strategies to help make mealtimes a more enjoyable experience for children and families!

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