



## Fussy Eaters

Fussy eating and kids seems to go hand in hand and when you have a GAPS child it's fussy eating times 1,000. The number of children I've met over the years with only a few foods in their repertoire is quite amazing with many of the foods being highly processed, starchy and full of sugar. When this is happening it's hard to believe that it is actually possible to change this behaviour and the child's palate, it just takes time and a HUGE amount of persistence and unwavering determination.

So the question is, how do you get your child to eat anything else.. well here's where the persistence and determination come in and for those of you that have children with Autism and know it.. ABA Therapy.

ABA Therapy stands for Applied Behaviour Analysis and is the term we use when talking about behaviour modification. It's used widely on children with Autism with good success in most cases but the truth of it is (from someone who's done it with their own child) it's tough, it'll make you cry but it's definitely worth the hard work.

So how do you implement it.. well here's the crux of it (you can read more about it in the GAPS book in Chapter 4, "It's Feeding Time! Oh, No!")...

Before I get started a little tip that worked for me was when I was considering implementing this (I did it for the whole family not just my son) I discussed the process with everyone over dinner one night.

We talked about the special diet, the reasons we were going to be doing it and how much better we would feel as a result. I do think this made the transition a little easier in our case but you can make that decision based on your own circumstances.

Using Stage One as an example, imagine you're sitting down with your child and ready to start with a nice bowl of soup. You want the child to accept the soup and eat it but of course there's a high probability that won't happen without some resistance.

I recommend starting stage one over the weekend as you will possibly need two adults at the beginning to keep your child at the table.

For a verbal child:

- Place the bowl of soup on the table, you can be feeding them or you can insist they feed themselves, that's up to you.
- Make sure you have a reward ready for them when they have a mouthful. This reward is anything you feel is a motivator eg: iPad time, watching a DVD, reading a book etc but NOT food.
- The important thing is that the motivator is only available when they do what you want them to do and no other time. There's no motivation for a child to do something for the iPad if they know they'll have access to it regardless.



- Stay calm, keep smiling and be patient. One adult needs to be behind the child to ensure they don't run away from the table or try to move away and the other parent is there with a spoonful of the soup encouraging the child to have it.
- Don't get upset, don't lose your temper and ignore bad behaviour.
- As soon as they have the mouthful, encourage and praise the child and give them their reward for 2 minutes. Then switch off the reward (perhaps use a timer as a prompt for time up) then sit them back down and try for 2 spoonfuls.
- Continue this with the rewards until they've eaten a whole bowl of soup or had a whole cup of the broth.
- You pretty much do this all consistently all day every day until the child realises the deal (they tend to catch on fairly quickly as long as you don't cave in)
- Each meal you sit down for you increase the number of spoonfuls the child has to eat before they get their reward until eventually they won't get the reward until they've eaten a whole bowl of soup and drunk their broth.
- Each day we're working towards them eating more and more of the foods on the diet with less resistance.

#### For a non-verbal child

- The approach is the same except for the non-verbal child, in the very initial stages, we may need to reward them with a small something of a food they like. That will be very child dependent and you could still find other motivators just as successful as the main issue rewarding with food is eventually you WILL have to take it away so you may still have the same behavioural response it's just been delayed slightly.

#### For a baby

- For a baby who is breast fed that is being introduced to some elements of the GAPS Diet the process is slightly different again.
- Assuming the breast feeding is going to continue as there's no issues with allergies etc then use the breast as the reward.
- Before the breast is given present the baby with 1 teaspoon of the meat stock. The goal is to teach the infant that what is on the spoon is safe.
- When they've had that tiny bit of meat stock present the breast for the rest of the feed.
- Continue this process until they're having a small bottle of the meat stock.
- This is a good way to introduce solids to the baby whilst ensuring they're still getting the goodness of breast milk and teaches the baby that the spoon isn't dangerous.



- Infants can find the transition to solids uncomfortable and begin to associated the spoon with pain, particularly if they have poor gut bacteria and are reacting to foods.

#### Additional information

It's important to remember that processed foods and sugars are almost like a drug addiction to many of these children as they've been feeding the bad bacteria for a number of years. This means that the bad bacteria isn't going to be particularly happy and the child is almost going to experience some level of withdrawal symptoms so expect behavioural issues and even some regression for awhile until this clears through.

If the child decides they're not going to eat don't worry, they will eventually. I haven't met a child that has starved themselves yet. The important thing to remember is to ensure they're having enough water, they're with you, they're safe and you continue to offer food and broth regularly, they'll eventually realise there's nothing else and hunger will get the better of them.

Finally please note, from experience ABA therapy as a whole was the hardest therapy I've ever implemented with my son and I've tried a few. Without a doubt though, it was the best and most successful therapy we ever used and as a result we have such a different child and such a different life.

I do recommend being strong and being persistent and you WILL reap the rewards in the long run.