

Sensory Approach to Experience Taste, Texture, and Develop Oral Motor Control

For children with disabilities, mealtimes can often present significant challenges. Sensory sensitivities, oral motor difficulties, and feeding aversions can make introducing new foods and textures an overwhelming and stressful experience. A sensory approach to feeding can help to overcome these challenges by creating a positive and stimulating environment that encourages exploration and learning.



A Sensory Approach to Experience Taste, Texture, & Develop Oral-Motor Control by Michael Asimow

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Benefits of a Sensory Approach

A sensory approach to feeding offers numerous benefits for children with disabilities, including:

- Increased acceptance of new foods and textures
- Improved oral motor skills

- Reduced feeding aversions
- Enhanced sensory processing
- Increased enjoyment of mealtimes

Sensory Strategies for Taste and Texture Development

There are a variety of sensory strategies that can be used to encourage taste and texture development in children with disabilities. These strategies include:

1. Gradual Exposure

Gradually introducing new foods and textures is essential for helping children to become comfortable with them. Start by offering small amounts of new foods in a variety of ways. For example, you could offer a new fruit as a puree, then gradually increase the texture to mashed, then chopped, and finally whole.

2. Sensory Pairing

Pairing new foods with familiar and preferred foods can help children to become more accepting of them. For example, you could offer a new vegetable as a dip for a favorite fruit.

3. Sensory Play

Sensory play is a great way for children to explore new foods and textures in a safe and non-threatening environment. Provide your child with a variety of sensory bins filled with different foods and textures. Encourage them to explore the foods with their hands, mouths, and noses.

Oral Motor Strategies for Control Development

In addition to sensory strategies, there are also a number of oral motor strategies that can be used to help children with disabilities develop oral motor control. These strategies include:

1. Oral Motor Exercises

There are a variety of oral motor exercises that can help to strengthen the muscles in the mouth and improve coordination. These exercises can be done with a variety of materials, such as straws, tongue depressors, and chewy toys.

2. Blowing Bubbles

Blowing bubbles is a fun and engaging way to strengthen the muscles in the mouth. Provide your child with a variety of bubble wands and encourage them to blow bubbles of different sizes and shapes.

3. Chewing Gum

Chewing gum can help to strengthen the muscles in the jaw and improve coordination. Choose a sugar-free gum and supervise your child while they are chewing.

Practical Tips for Implementation

Here are some practical tips for implementing a sensory approach to feeding and oral motor control development:

- Start slowly and gradually introduce new foods and textures.
- Be patient and provide your child with plenty of opportunities to explore new foods.
- Make mealtimes a positive and enjoyable experience.

- Work with a speech-language pathologist or occupational therapist to develop a personalized plan for your child.

A sensory approach to feeding can help children with disabilities to experience taste and texture, develop oral motor control, and enjoy mealtimes. By using a variety of sensory and oral motor strategies, you can help your child to reach their full potential.



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