

Arizona Nutrition Network Lesson Plan

Type of Nutrition Education Class/Activity:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Lesson | <input type="checkbox"/> Game |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Presentation | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Demonstration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Activity and Nutrition message | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Class Location: _____ Date of Lesson: _____

AzNN Partner Class Instructor: _____

Title of Lesson: **Nibbles for Health: Handling a “Picky” Eater**

Estimated Class Time: 30 minutes

Lesson Goal:

1. To recognize that picky eating is normal for young children.
2. To know an effective way to handle a picky eater.

Arizona Academic Standards:

Lesson Objectives: (Use SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time Specific)

Participants will have

1. Identified normal eating habits of children
2. Applied the idea of “parent/child responsibilities at mealtimes” to solve common picky eater concerns.

Materials and Preparation: (List and attach lesson handouts/reinforcement items and evaluation form for class presentation)

- Normal Eating Habits of Children poster board
- Parents’ Responsibilities and Child’s responsibilities at Mealtimes poster board
- Eating Behavior activity card
- Handout: Nibbles for Health #13 “Handling a Choosy Eater”
- ERI’s: TBD

Brief SNAP Outreach Message: “The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact 1-800-352-8401.”

Sequence of lesson/script (Relate to each objective)

I. Introduction

Welcome the participants and introduce yourself, and ask participants to introduce themselves.

Ask:

1. Do you remember any foods that you wanted to eat all the time when you were little?
2. What were they?
3. Have any of your children insisted on the same food over and over?
4. How does this make you feel?

Today we are going to talk about picky eaters. Whether or not you have a child who is a picky eater, the information we will share today will help you have more pleasant mealtimes. Mealtime is too important to spend fighting about food. This discussion will be interactive so I encourage all of you to share your experiences.

II. The “Picky” Eater

Let’s start by identifying some eating habits of children. (*Display Normal Eating Habits of Children poster board*) These are some typical ways that young children or babies act at mealtimes that sometimes make them difficult to feed. Usually these behaviors are most common in 2-5 year olds. Raise your hand when I read one that you can relate to. (*Read each point one at a time*)

What are some of the ways you have tried to deal with your child’s picky eating? (*Allow responses, but don’t comment on whether the participant handled the matter appropriately or inappropriately*) Some of these behaviors can make you worry because you may think your child will not eat well or grow well. Some of them can turn into bad habits if they are not handled well. Handling eating challenges in a positive way can help your child grow up with good food habits.

It helps to keep in mind that children may behave these ways because they are:

- Learning about their world
- Trying to be independent
- Developing muscle coordination so they’re often messy with food.
- Playing with their food might mean they are done eating.

These behaviors are a normal part of growth and development.

So what are some things parents can do when faced with these eating behaviors?

III. Parent/child mealtime responsibilities

A helpful tool is remembering the parents’ responsibilities and the children’s responsibilities at mealtimes. Let’s see how this can help us with some of our concerns.

First, let’s talk about the **parents’ responsibilities** at mealtimes. (*Display poster board with parent’s responsibilities and go over each of the following points*):

What to serve:

- The parent decides what healthy foods to serve
- Don’t be a short order cook: offer the same food for the whole family
- Plan at least one food everyone will eat

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When to serve it:

- Have a routine of meals and snacks, about every 2-3 hours so your child knows when to expect to eat; this gives your child a sense of security
- Expect the child to be present at meals, even if he/she does not want to eat – but do not force the child to eat.
- Set reasonable time limits for the start and end of the meal, and then remove the plate quietly.

As a parent or caregiver you also have the responsibility to set a good example of appropriate behavior at mealtimes. **Model appropriate eating behaviors:**

- Sit down while eating. That means sitting at the table to eat, not watching TV while eating.
- Focus on the foods being eaten. Do not have toys or books at the table.

A picky eater may insist on eating only one food meal after meal and refuse to eat until they get what they want. What do you think may happen if you always give in to this behavior? (*Allow responses - possible response: the child will continue this behavior*).

What do you think may happen if you ignore it? (*Allow responses - possible responses: maybe they won't eat; they will stop the behavior if it no longer gets them what they want*)

The advice from child nutrition experts is: **Ignore negative behavior.**

Although doing this may cause you some concern at first, because as a good parent you may worry if your child refuses to eat, but it's important to keep this in mind:

- Behaviors that get attention continue.
- Behaviors that are ignored stop.

If you don't want your child to continue displaying inappropriate behavior, it is important to ignore it. Instead, give attention and praise to appropriate eating behaviors. And don't worry: your child will not starve. Remember that you will be offering a healthy snack in just a few hours.

What questions or comments do you have about the parents' responsibilities? *Allow responses.*

Now, let's see what the **children's responsibilities** are. (*Display poster board and go over each of the following points*):

How much to eat:

- The child decides how much to eat
- Remember to provide small servings – let your child ask for more if they want more.
- Do not force or bribe a child to eat everything on their plate. Forcing a child to eat more encourages overeating.

Whether or not to eat:

- The child decides *if* they want to eat.
- Trust your child's appetite; he/she will know when they are hungry or full.
- It's OK if your child skips a meal; he/she will make up for it at the next meal.
- Choosy eaters may not want to try new foods right away, so encourage but don't force.

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Allowing your child to make this kind of decision might be hard for a parent. What concerns or questions do you have?

IV. Activity

Let's get into small groups of 2 or 3. I'll give each pair or group a card with an eating behavior on it. Your group will discuss what you think the parent can do to handle the challenge. Remember to think about the parents' responsibilities and the children's responsibilities and also what normal behavior is for a child at mealtimes. We will take about 2 or 3 minutes for this, and then we will hear from your group.

(After the time is up, ask for a volunteer from each group to read their card and share the ideas their group had. Give positive feedback for their comments.)

The best advice for parents is: relax and be patient! By learning how to handle eating challenges in a positive way we can avoid conflict and make mealtime a happy time.

Evaluation (How was each objective met)

Questions and answers

Closure (Recap- call to Action)

So, today we have had an interesting discussion on normal eating behaviors of children and a positive and effective way to handle these. Let's see what you have learned.

1. What are some common and normal eating behaviors children sometimes have?
 2. What are a parent's responsibilities at mealtime?
 3. What are the child's responsibilities at mealtime?
2. Name one way you could use this idea of the parents' responsibilities and children's responsibilities with your family.

Here is a sheet with some good tips for picky eaters and their parents. (Handout out the **Nibbles for Health #13**)

Thank you all for participating in today's lesson!

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