

Instructions for Use of Marble Jar to Improve Food Enjoyment



One of the “side effects” of having a child with ARFID is that the enjoyment around eating has often been lost in the stress of making sure your child eats enough foods and/or eats a nutritionally diverse diet. In addition, children with ARFID often have loads of negative experiences with food that build up over the course of their life, leading them to have a negative emotional association with food.

To address this problem, we let go of a focus on outcomes – whether our actions resulted in our child trying or like a new food. Instead, we free ourselves to focus on having a *memorable and pleasant* experience in which food is present or involved in some way.

Pleasant memories can be anything, but here are some ideas.

- Cooking together. The trap to avoid: this is just about cooking. Do not try to use it as a way to get your child to try a taste of something. If they want to, they will.
- Watching a cooking show together. The trap to avoid: comparing your child to the children on the show. The thing to suggest: I bet we could make that.
- Having an enjoyable meal together. An enjoyable meal may need to have all of these elements:
 - The child is eating safe foods.
 - Parents are eating foods they enjoy.
 - It is quiet.
 - If there is an activity, the family is doing it together (like watching a movie).
 - It is fun. Maybe a funny conversation topic from the conversation card deck, a story from when the parents were younger... possibilities are endless
- Shopping together. Try giving your child some assignments. Like a scavenger hunt (see our suggestions). The catch: they are not expected to try it.
- Gardening together.
- Making a food gift for someone.
- Making a meal for someone else.
- Stamping pleasant food memories in our minds.

To mark them and help children have a visual representation of their positive memories with food, we suggest getting an empty jar and adding a marble or some other cute small item to mark for every time they have a pleasurable memory with food. Some children enjoy decorating the jar and calling it something like: “the positive memory jar”, “food fun jar”, or something of the sort. Your child is in charge. When they feel like there has been a pleasant food experience, they get to add a marble to the jar.

Some other ways you can help your child remember their positive memories with food:

- Record them.
- Take a picture.
- Draw a picture.
- Write about it.
- We include a journal for both the parent and child to keep a record of these pleasant food experiences.