

# how to help your teen or young adult conquer picky eating

Your teen or young adult is on a journey of discovery around their eating. You and your family may have a long history of struggle, worry, and conflict over food. As your child gets older your role has changed, from infancy when you provided all the food and made all the choices, to now, when your support is still important but in different ways.

Read through the exercises in the book. Get a sense of how complicated and challenging eating can be. Possibly you have struggled with your own eating. Perhaps you can join your child in some of the exercises, if they are open to it, or do them on your own. Parenting a teen or young adult is a tricky dance. You are needed, but they are also becoming independent and thriving adults. The following are some ways you can help, and you and your child may come up with others! Try to listen and remain open to new ideas.

- Try not to judge or criticize how your child eats right now.
- Work on being good company at meals. Focus on connecting with your child rather than on what or how much she eats.
- Be supportive around shopping for and cooking meals. Ask your child how you can help, then try to listen; perhaps a ride to the grocery store to pick out foods or a trip to Costco to sample items.
- Try not to comment or ask questions during their discovery process. Sometimes this can feel like pressure to your child. You can even ask, “Do you want me to ask questions, or would you like to wait and keep me posted?”
- Use phrases such as, “If you ever want to talk about this, I’m here,” “How can I be helpful to you?” or “Would it help if I...?”
- Cheerleading their successes may feel like pressure, because they may not want to disappoint you the next time.
- If you think your child needs to work with a professional, help them identify resources and then support that process as best you can. (See Chapter 40 for red flags and resources on when to seek help.)
- Let them know you love them unconditionally. They may feel as though they disappoint you with their eating.
- Find ways to spend time together that don’t involve food.
- When eating together, try to have at least one food you know your child can eat.
- If you are cooking or in charge of meals, consider your child’s preferences. For example, make a mild chili and serve hot sauce on the side for those who like more spice. Serve a side they enjoy such as rice, corn bread, or rolls.
- Be patient with this process. It can take a long time to build a positive relationship with food.

If you or your child find it difficult to work through some parts of the workbook, please see the references section on our Website at [extremepickyeating.com](https://www.extremepickyeating.com) for various levels of help to delve deeper into topics of disordered eating, body positivity, weight diversity, eating competence, and clinical eating disorders.