



# PARENTING FOCUS

## Food Anxiety Top Tips

Children's attitudes when it comes to eating are subject to change and can be affected when they feel as though they are under pressure.

Problems with food can arise as unhealthy coping mechanisms or an attempt to obtain control.

Food anxiety is a recognised issue with many children with learning and developing needs such as ADHD.

### What food anxiety may look like in your child:

- They try to avoid eating around others.
- Binge eating.
- Becoming stressed during mealtimes.
- Withdrawing socially.
- Excessive exercising.
- Developing strict behaviours at dinner time such as making sure they make their own meals or only using specific utensils.

## **How you can help:**

### **Mealtimes as a family:**

Mealtimes being spent together can help to encourage social eating attitudes. Be sure to keep the conversation neutral and avoid triggering topics.

### **Encourage your child to keep contact with friends and family:**

Helping them to make sure they are still doing positive activities with people around them can be a positive distraction from negative or intrusive thoughts.

### **Make time to talk:**

Talking whilst engaging in an activity at the same time helps children to open up and find it easier to talk honestly with you. Avoid being dismissive or judgemental so that a safe environment is developed between you.

### **Associate food with fun:**

Involving your child to cook or go food shopping with helps food and eating to be seen as an enjoyable activity. Additionally, introducing a small/play kitchen will help them to view cooking and eating as something exciting and less like a chore.