

# BASICS OF BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

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*feeding matters*

*Conquering pediatric feeding struggles  
to nourish healthy futures*

## what is behavioral therapy?

Behavioral therapy is a type of treatment that seeks to understand how behavior and feelings are learned. Often conducted by psychologists and counselors, it helps to turn negative behaviors into both positive and desired behaviors. When you change a behavior you can often change feelings.

## what can behavioral therapy help treat?

- anxiety
- depression
- disruptive behavior
- child non-compliance

## what is behavioral feeding therapy?

Behavioral feeding therapy is the use of behavioral interventions to target and treat feeding struggles. It targets displayed reactions during mealtimes where interventions can be focused on changing behaviors, interest, and participation with oral feeding. Behavioral feeding therapy requires a lot of commitment from parents and takes hard work. Many times, parents are asked to change their own behaviors in order to help change their child's behaviors.

## what is the difference between can't eat and won't eat ?

Once a child has been appropriately evaluated, a provider can then determine if the feeding struggle is a "can't" eat or a "won't" eat issue. A "can't" eat is an underlying medical or swallowing struggle that interferes with a child's eating. A "won't" eat is a refusal to eat or drink for an unknown reason.

## how long does behavioral feeding therapy take?

The length of behavioral feeding therapy is individually focused and typically depends on the child's medical history, development ability, and skills.

## how does behavioral feeding therapy work?

Behavioral feeding therapy is a thorough assessment that usually incorporates more than one discipline. medical professionals will set goals for treatment (short-term and long-term), ask why you're seeking behavioral feeding therapy, decide on an intervention, and then proceed with follow-up sessions. Follow-up sessions will monitor the process of the intervention set, as well as discuss difficulties and successes since the last meeting.

## will behavioral feeding therapy cure your child?

This is a very difficult question to answer as behavioral feeding therapy is one piece to the larger puzzle. However, behavioral feeding therapy can be successful for children, when applied correctly with appropriate goals.