



## Brenda Chats to Meg McClintock

Brenda: Hi everybody. Today I have managed to organize Meg McClintock who's going to talk to us about teenagers and fasting eating. Normally, when we think about fussy eating, we sort of think the sixth month to eight years of age but as we know here in Thrive we are experiencing a lot of fussy eating with twins and teens as well. It's kind of hard to find information about that area that's why I'm so excited to invite Meg. Hi Meg! Thank you so much for being here today--

Meg: Hello! Thanks for having me.

Brenda: --because you work on this area but first...

Meg: I do.

Brenda: -- Before we go into it. Would you mind telling us a little bit about yourself please?

Meg: Yeah, sure. I'm a curative practicing dietitian and an accredited nutritionist and what you call a body image advocate because it's particularly in teenage years we simply can't separate our choices around food from our thoughts around our body. We'll get into that a bit later. My background, as I started in Hospital Dietetics and then once before five years ago I started my prior practice, nutrition which is sort of more of into doing some speaking in nutrition education schools and writing, and blogging, and all of that as well. I am also a mom of three little boys who keep me very busy. [laughter]

Brenda: Three did you say?

Meg: Three boys, yeah. My oldest is seven and then five and two. So yeah, fizzy. [laughter]

Brenda: Sure sounds like it. Thank you so much for your time today. [laughter] Do you mind telling us about why you are so passionate about what you do?

Meg: Yeah, sure! Lots of reasons but the main one is that for a lot of people moms in particular about teenagers and anyone, food is what come really hard and relationship with food has just become difficult. There's so much noise around food coming from all angles whether it's from nutrition, all of it is coming from convenience and marketing or if it's coming from concerns about body image just being so much noise is going on. We make a lot of food decisions in a day. So if you're not calm and comfortable in your relationship with food, I mean with food decisions. You can only derail your life and I'm not just talking about really worrying about clinical disorders in eating but this is whole spectrum of just kind of ease around food and every time we've got to make decision is stress and anxiety, and worry, and guilt or shame and, oh, it can be really hard.

If we can work, if I can help people sort of reconnect some body trust and some trust in their own ability to make good choices for themselves then it can just quiet that noise and so they can just move on, make decision, and get on with life rather than it just being it's constant dialogue in their head around food choices. It can be such a powerful thing to develop a good relationship with food or it can really be destructive. That's why I just love working in this area because you can make a profound impact on, your whole life not just on the health of the physical health but on their ability to reach their potential and to achieve what they have achieved and just be able to back themselves.

Brenda: It's amazing to think about food without being able to provide all of that.

Meg: Yeah, it's so broad because if you think about it, almost a food obsession and I apologize. So we've got all the TV shows - master chef, my kitchen rules - and we've got, you know, the dude food movement and super sizing upsizing and eat this whole steak and put your name on the wall kind of like a total indulgence over the top side of things and on the other hand we've got this fear culture around food and dieting, and calories are earned and then burned, and it's the end pleasure and connecting is not in really that considered. So trying to bring in together all the great things about food, about relating, and caring people, and generosity and pleasure, as well as considering our impact on the environment or sustainability concerns. There's really good reasons why there's so much talk about food and so much focus on food but it can be quite destructive if it gets out of hand.

Brenda: I guess that's what you end up saying in clinic when you say -

Meg: Yeah. This is a level of confusion and anxiety around food.

Brenda: We want to sort of de-mystify the area of fussy eating in teenagers in particular in this conversation. Would it be right to say Meg, that picky eating at say three years of age is a normal part of development but it's not so much normal at 10 or 14? Would you agree with that statement?

Meg: It's not as common but it certainly isn't uncommon to have this level of fussyness and pickiness. It's hard to know whether we don't see people as often at that age because it's not creating as much stress even if picky eating is still there and whether that's because the kids having much more of control or the parents happy with that. It has different reasons why it might not be seen such a problem in the older years but certainly often get quite it's coming to me around uncontrolled tummy troubles. I mean once you sort of dig into it that's actually going on with the eating, it's actually can be really limit or really unbalanced saying within iron deficiencies and concerns about growth trajectory and all that, you know, slowed down growth and weight gain. Often it might be presented as a medical thing that if you drill down it is the unbalanced and their fussiness around food which might be the core.

Brenda: Well, this is why this question was, what would be the underlying reasons for picky teens, picky tweens and teens?

Meg: sometimes they can just be around control. So there has been a pattern of-- about the division of responsibility and who's actually should be in control of what around food. And parents even if they control the what, the where and the when, and the child is responsible with the how much if any and that's one of the basic structure which is still, as long as someone is living in your home is still actually should be the framework that we hang things on flexibly but that's the framework. Whereas if you had the case that hasn't been followed for millions of reasons, it's not coming with judgment to a point where the children actually have a lot of control over the what, where and when. They start enforcing that control and they're bigger and they're tall and they reach things, and they've got that extra access.

Sometimes it's simply about-- not simply but about a cross-over of boundaries of food to making what decisions. A big one which is quite worrying is when it comes

around body image and weight concerns and we see them a lot in teenage girls. Sometimes it's a matter of they're learning about parts of the food industry and deciding, "Oh, I don't want to actually eat food," like you know, a lot of them are vegetarians, have been veganism which starts to sort of come out which can sometimes be truly absolutely around ethical concerns but there is a portion which is actually around fear of food and control, and restriction, and fear of weight and decide to lose weight quite hiding behind that ethical choice and it can be really tricky to actually unpack.

What is this actually that eases about control and restriction in girls or is this genuinely about a concern for the treatment of animals and so she's choosing not to eat them. Whether you put those sorts of choices in the picky eating or not, they certainly can cause a lot of stress for the family if it's not, if there's a family don't eat that way it would be the same as picky eating. Lots of different building blocks and then on top of that we still might have undiagnosed or not well managed sensory problems for kids with developmental issues or people that are on the autism spectrum then that can also still - If it hasn't been an extension of their repertoire of what they will eat, that can sometimes be a sign that actually there's something blocking them from being able to. They're not being willfully difficult. They're not refusing because they're just, you know, being a bit painful but actually they can't move past. They're just not capable of that and we need to help them and get through that.

Brenda: Gosh, because it really does feel like as they become tweens and teenagers that they are just doing it to be really painful.

Meg: Yes, and I think it depends how sometimes you might get into a situation where we've got a parent trying to control very much the food, they're try pushing back because they want this autonomy and they want to be making their own decisions and someone's that can be about well whatever you say I'm going to do but often it's not just about that.

Brenda: So more often they're not reduced...

Meg: Yes, not always that they're just being difficult. [laughter]

Brenda: Right. Okay. Obviously then that's quite complicated because what we find in Thrive and it is the truth that if you do start your child in a positive path from a young age and model and eat together, and get them in the kitchen then you're less likely to -- I mean often they do still rebel at some point. You're most likely experience the picky eating teens.

Meg: Yeah, and that's very much backed up around family meals in particular. Children who have a high number of family meals per week tend to eat more leafy vegetables and that persists into young adulthood as well as having reduced rights of disordered behaviors around the food the more family meals that you have. So all of those patterns are best ideal worlds when they're really, really young but you can certainly make little gains. We don't want to be able to feel like you can't do anything to improve this situation and give up. Absolutely not. We not might have go from way about now straight to or seeing around the table, home and head and singing or you have a lovely family time. That might be really too far but we can gradually bring in little strategies and little patterns of expectations around the home, and expectations and boundaries and all of that to gradually move towards having the same meals.

Brenda: Oh wow. Okay. That's quite helpful because I think a lot of parents of teens would probably feel a bit out of control with the kids and their fussy eating behaviors.

Meg: Yeah, and partly the eating can sometimes just be part of a wider pattern of relating or of comes around on who is in control of what and so it can cause a lot of stress if that's the one that the parents particularly stress out in nutrition centric society and all of this marketing about giving your kids the best start if they're not having this perfect diets. What are they missing out on and all that stuff can actually freak out about what's going on with food but actually it's the same core problem that they might be having around bed time - is that their child is basically making too many of their own decisions without the frontal lobe development to be making good decisions. So that's bringing back step-by-step, that structure and that control to who's making which decisions because we really I've heard of a great psychologist that, you know, parents of teens in particular they need to be their child's prefrontal cortex inside in judgment and being able to make--be more abstract that make decisions now based on this future ideas. It's still developing, it's still developing, it's not there so it's unfair to accept the child to make great decisions. They need to setup a structure in which is the default as much as possible.

Brenda: So we're not only going to be the parent, we've got to be the prefrontal cortex, all of that.

Meg: Prefrontal cortex, that's right and just in case it wasn't hard enough already.

Brenda: When does that fully develop actually? Do you know?

Meg: In 20s. Yeah, they're different rate to different kids but generally, just when we see them risk taking behavior and I think, what were you thinking. Just fine new ways to make it easy and normal for them to be making a better decision.

Brenda: Okay. So that's quite profound. You're saying you need to actually take a little look at your overall parenting not just isolate the fussy eating behavior on its own that if you take that control--perhaps, you have lost control unwittingly, unknowingly...

Meg: Yeah, and with that it's often with a good reason. Parenting is really like no one is hearing you saying parenting is so easy. There are often really good reasons why we've gotten into the point where we've got in there like it's not always setting out to making time for themselves but there are patterns that are a better than others for children. Our classic one--which is often one of the first things that I do with people when parents tell they won't eat breakfast and then teen do what does the morning look like for you. So he doesn't have breakfast and he want in, he's might have pack or something in the car and so again, the child is deciding the what, nothing, the when, maybe on the way to school and the where. My advise in that situation is okay, we need to change the morning routine. So no matter what they're doing between a certain time is sitting at the table time, they don't have to eat, but the screens are off between 10 to 7 or 10 past 7, and that's sitting at the table time whether you're eating or not it doesn't matter but the screen is off because if he said your child is sitting in the couch on the iPad, "Do you want breakfast?" "No." [laughter] or watching TV, "No, I don't want breakfast." But if you say, "Okay, everyone has to sit on the table now for 10 minutes." If the food is sitting on the table there and there's a selection of food that's suitable for them. They know, well, I can sit here and be silly for 10 minutes which might happen the first three days but once they realize you're really serious and actually this is the new routine they do invariably start actually eating from what is offered on the table at that time.

Brenda: I like it, Meg. [laughter] I like it a lot. Modeling as well.

Meg: Yeah. I'm done with eating at the kitchen bench drinking the coffee on the run or trying to feed the kids in their high chairs and all that and the morning is frantic and we now have the routine that closing the dinner meal is by setting a table for breakfast with the oats, the muesli, the plates everything on the table and that's the foods closest to the night. No more food, the kitchen is closed, the table is set for breakfast and so the next morning it's easy because the kids can pull it around in their own cereal, oats or whatever they can carry. The milk from the fridge, sometimes, you know, I cut out some fruit or whatever and so they can choose from what's on the table. The parents are responsible for the what, this is what you have to choose from. Making sure there's something that's acceptable to them. You might start with less nutritious foods to get the pattern happening when you start with structure and then you can grade up, grade up, grade up. And so that parent is back in control of the what, what is on the table. Of the when, this is breakfast time it's now or never and you have to sit at the table. You don't have to eat but you have to sit at the table. So that's the where and then the kids either decide to sit there and not eat or they eat but if they don't eat then there's nothing until the next planned meal which is probably recess.

Brenda: Yes, that's right. I absolutely love that. And even getting the kids involved in choosing what's going to be for breakfast is just that other extra step, isn't it?

Meg: Yeah, that's why but not in the moment. So if we let them choose in the moment then they're deciding of the what which is crossing those boundary regarding stress but if you get outside the moment, worrying why are you aren't sitting. Finally, five or ten minutes on the weekend to actually sit down and go, "Okay, family meals is where a family, we're all got different likes and dislikes so we want to consider those but I'm not cooking three meals a night. You choose this night, mom choose this night that so and so because this is not rolling out we're getting whatever like getting on the run. So when they do come to dinner, "I don't want this," you go, "That's okay. Being in a family means that sometimes you eat what you love and sometimes you eat what other people love." And that's just learning to share and tomorrow night we're having whatever it else that they chose. Giving that control but not in a way that makes it your chore of cooking or feeling stressed or wasting this food or just storing your heads up and going forget that whatever.

Brenda: Yeah, fantastic. And you're sitting there and eating and connecting with your child and there are few parents in the course that actually admit that the kids won't eat breakfast and we don't either.

Meg: Yeah, and if you're not a breakfast person I'm like I think that that's fine like we want to listen to our bodies and a lot of people is just not they have it. So again but still sitting there and having some nice time sitting out the day, sending people off when they're away could be great and it might have to happen every morning. You might have before school activities so not be late, it doesn't have to be when I say family meals, it doesn't have to be everyone. Seeing a mom and one child, sitting together that's a family. That's a family meal. One of the kid is home and one parent that's a family meal. All the kids they're sitting together with a food on the table with the parents supervision is a family meal. We don't want to get like to [too dramatic that not everyone is there. [laughter] it doesn't count because it absolutely does.

Brenda: Often my kids would say because we never eat in front of the TV or with anything like that but now, you know, sometimes they're just chilling out in front of the TV because my kids will never say no to food. "Who's ready for dinner?" "Can we eat it in front of the TV?" You know what, "No." But once a week it's master chef's on, because that's when they get really hungry. Watching that, yeah. Let's just enjoy. It's nice to break your own rules as well as...

Meg: Absolutely and we did that a little bit. Sometimes we'll do maybe not and so when we eat whatever is on the picnic lying in front of the TV and it's fine. A lot of people I do want some extra curricular activities and so if you're having zero family dinners just try to get into one, and remembering that again looking from the research. Family meals are extremely and strongly associated with a positive outcomes most strongly than they're being playful of being in a community group and things like that, really, really strong social around reducing risk taking behavior and malnutritional things. Just being with it actually sometimes the better choice might be because I'm crossing one of those extra curricular things for that family time and not being so outcome focus and doing things around getting good at something but more about the family and building those relationships and those connections.

Brenda: Oh, family meal, shall we go into depths with that one in the Thrive course. I'm glad to hear you also, I mean almost everyone we've spoken to it's undeniable that the benefits of family member and it's becoming...

Meg: Yeah. It can still be stressful. I'm lucky to sit up for five to six minutes and even if I'm done transitioning to the meal. [laughter] I don't want to give you some



impression that everything is totally wonderful and brilliant all the time, you know I get all the same problems that everybody else does but it is much less stressful.

Alex: Yeah, because often in our family meal time can turn into a battle field just with my kids fighting or everyone stressed at the end of the day and I sit there and wonder, really? There's benefit in this? But it's not the norm that it's --

Meg: Yeah, that's right. There will be days where you haven't--one of the type of the day they're just over it and they're tired and so having those expectations, we let out to get down once it's done and we stay with how they're talking, having a nice time and he's gradually willing to learn actually the action and the nice thing is over there and I'm wanting to come back to the table even though he's in, he's finished eating. It's about setting behavior expectations. I'm afraid if you don't eat the food it's still fine, you don't have to eat it but you do have to sit up and you have to be polite. You have to learn to decline things politely and we're going to have a nice time. We believe minimize food talk as much as possible at the table.

Alex: What do you mean you minimize food talk? Oh, you mean negative food talk?

Meg: Any food talk. [laughter] because it can be quite pressure. I'm going to talk about taste and delicious is, but there's no gender there to try to get my kids to eat more. I'm very much letting them responsible for from what I provide them on the table to decide what they eat and what they don't eat. Whereas when things get so zero food talk for the first five minutes while we're talking about how was your day, just leaving the food except for energy you want this, do you want that. Just taking the focus off the food and take the focus to the community and to the chatting and to relating. It's a nice time if it's become a battleground around food in particular and the kids not wanting to eat and they're coming to the table stressed, and anxiety suppresses the appetite. So if they're coming to the table and they're anxious because something's going to put in front of me that I don't want to eat and it's going with a fight and I'm going to sigh, and then I'm going to stall my...you know, if they're coming to table like that it's not going to end well.

Getting back to that division of responsibility if you don't eat it you do have to come and sit up and this is all there is until whatever your next meal is. It just takes that stress, it takes the pressure away and food talk can actually imply a lot of pressure. So if you say something, oh, great job for eating your broccoli that can to some to some kids to think okay I did the right thing now, what if I don't eat the broccoli tomorrow and the broccoli's there am I now bad? Because kids they have some amazing cycle of thoughts and I really do feel around food can feel quite stressed if

their sensory stuff going on or if there's concerns about their body going on. It can be hard out it's as teenagers finding out what actually is the if they can afford to keep their cards quite close to their chest but if you're having a nice meal time where the focus isn't on the food or when they're eating or whether they're not eating or what they're eating then you're keeping us a lot of communication open and you're keeping that--yeah, this is a nice place to be which is going to be much more important than any individual meal, individual food choice.

Alex: Yes, 100% agree. I love that, and that's an interesting one for me to hear about the food talk. I'll bring my awareness to that as well from now.

Meg: And I think it's more on that looking what's the intention of the food talk. It is important I love food and I love trying new food. I want to try and doing what we do as a sort of experiment of type with no pressure trying to expose them to more food. And it's like 4 or 5 different mandarin talks in the shops at the moment. I don't really know much about them so we did this experiment while we sat all there together, and we open them all up and had to look and we found what's the new lunch box some constantly for the lunch box. I think it's just that curiosity in wanting to learn about what do you like, what don't you like, what's your favorite, what was your favorite. Respecting the differences and all of that. But if at the table you go, uhm yummy, mommy likes this so much. It is about wanting them to eat. But as we can actually trust that if just eat what we eat as they grow up they will learn to eat in patterns of we eat from what they've been exposed to again and again, and again in a nice positive way they will eat how we eat. They might go through a period though of eating all sorts of stuff that we don't eat. [laughter] When they get their first job and all of a sudden, oh, look at all this stuff, but that's a normal way and we finally make a decision to ride away and not making a big deal and just keep it in so we're not more likely to make things worse by creating a battle ground.

Brenda: Yeah, and creating that feel that makes them, you know, and then start to hide their food choices rather than be open and comfortable and then that creates issues within themselves, doesn't it? I mean that was like my next question because as a mom of a 10 and 12 year old, who by the way would probably really still be into going and getting those variety of mandarins and sitting down and it's such a great idea.

Meg: It's quite fun, yeah.

Brenda: Yeah. I want to do it. They're very focused at this age on feeding in, meat. Food in particular junk food sadly seems to be a really big part of it, package processed food. I mean how would you recommend we handle this as parents?

Meg: Just taking them that different families make different decisions and what our role is as a parent and we're showing them that there's always going to be opportunities for food. It starts with the young, I can remember when I first go to school I come up from someone has chips in their lunch four to five days a week for so and so, and has chips in their lunch box. I get those comments, well, I used to but it's kind of gone over. Just saying, yeah, different families make different decisions. It's my job as your mom to make decisions that I think the best for you and so this is what I'm doing. Other people might, they as might work more than I do and so they don't have that. So try to take any value judgments out of it so it doesn't increase the excitement about it. People make different decisions to different reasons, I think this is really important so that's what the decisions that I'm making and I use sometimes food and everyday food terminology and things like adding your lunch box everyday then on the weekends we do tend to get a quite, you know, go to a little parties and social events. That's where we'll have our sometimes foods and just keeping it really a matter of fact that different families have different priorities, we made different choices based on a whole range of different things and as your mom it's my job to make these decisions for you. I'm not anything about fear around, you know, there's fear to terrible I won't never let you have those they're like, oh, because if they do they won't dominate them then they're going to think like I've done the wrong thing and then we set them down apart of having that really dysfunctional relationship with food with that fear or guilt around food which is you want to separate as much as possible.

Brenda: Yeah, wow. Fantastic! You've given me lots of food for thought that's great because sometimes we forget about the psychology of eating when we're talking about food and nutrition and we really all do want to get the most nutrition into our kids as we -- and we know that every mouthful of foods and opportunity to nourish them, right? And that we're making those not so fab choices that can be quite confronting for some parents.

Meg: It can be and I think we need to sort of step back and remember a few things and one of the things is that nutrition matters over a life time but our bodies are normally using it and so we can go through normal periods of time with really it's about for nutrition and that could still maintain health. There's actually a good research that suggest that if we have lots of core foods and lots of fruit and vegetables, lean proteins, quality dairy alternatives and quality grains. If we're actually having lots of those core foods, the non-core foods don't matter so much. So

if we can keep our homes where we do have control and you can expect that we all have control to be where we're promoting as much of those core foods as possible then we can relax. When we don't have control and not try to insert ourselves our control into a situations where it's probably going to do more harm than good throughout the relationship or to the choices.

It's really tempting and I suggest sometimes at parties and look at the table I think, oh okay, but then actually you know what, I'm going to trust my kids so I'll say, "Listen to your tummies, remember you tend to feel better when you balance sometimes food and everyday foods", also you know, save your appetite for dinner, enjoy the bit now. Encouraging them to tune in and encouraging them to make good choices and then trusting them to and they aren't always but they'll get there. When I'm talking with kids with cake, like take the icing off and they've had enough and then go and play whereas if we're being controlling them then they have this feeling that it's now or never about getting access to this food but don't be standing in the table just eating past the point of comfort because they're not sure they don't have that predictability that they're going to get another opportunity. So we talked about there's always another party, there's always opportunities for these about our bodies work best when we mostly have these sorts of food.

Brenda: You just answered my next question which was what about, you know, I have seen anybody and my own kids that they can't regulate themselves sometimes but you just pretty much answered that because I was going to say what if they don't seem to be able to regulate themselves, what if they're eating too much junk or they're not eating enough or they're eating too much but it seems to be that it's probably to do with the control again and the psychology of eating more than not being able to regulate themselves.

Meg: Yeah, but it will, it can be and we see that certainly in adults that actually in restrictive dieting. People who are in restricted diet are much more susceptible to upsizing, much more susceptible to food marketing and a small indulgence is much likely to send them off to a certain stage, binge like behavior. That's their normal diet cycle which starts with their restriction so we need to without -- do not be black and white about things so our kids can learn to continue to self regulate around that. So trust them, remind them that there's always an opportunity and teach them about families and sharing. Kids are inherently selfish and so they're more likely to grab both biscuits. Not talking to them about don't grab both biscuits because it's terrible for you and there's too much sugar and it's going to make all that negative stuff which is like it's really going to share leaving that for other people. If you don't keep

your non core foods or your pleasure foods, whatever you want to call them in sensible portions then they're not going to go overjoyed.

Brenda: Yeah, and then how would that look within the home? Because obviously if you want them sort of exposed to it so that it's not such a big exciting temptation when they're out and about. I mean, does that mean you have it around because have it at home that sort of thing. I mean we...

Meg: Not each time you can make this decisions for themselves and it depends on what was going back very long for them to decide. It can be socially engaged with the head and who is cooking and how often you are the one who take away food and all of that's going to make a difference as to how comfortable do you feel having that stuff around. The way that we managed sort of having this stuff in the house is that we have dessert nights week. We have dinner plus dessert in the middle of the table at the same time in portions for them and they can decide to eat their dessert if they want or they can eat it then before the main or they mix it all together, it's kind of disgusting but just really it neutralizes that this is special and amazing and I'm going to want to keep having it and then there's no eating past the point of comfort on the core foods so they get to the non core. There's no bribery, nothing is dependent on anything. I do regulate lollybags like the lollybags will go in a jar together and sometimes like they're all in the bin if I -- you're eating those or buy some other lollies that I'm happy eating. It's going to be a really individually balanced but if we've got them there and we're not allowing them it does increase that desirability. So being really clear about when they're allowed and when they're not but again it's parent directed. The what, where and when is up to the parents. If you're going to have them in the house then you need to make time where you're going to allow them to have it.

Brenda: Yeah. So just to begin, you're saying you put a dessert on the table at the same time as the dinner and they can choose from everything on their table.

Meg: Yeah, but I do portion the desserts. So it's not like they saw plenty of rice, chicken, veggies, whatever in all different platters plus they'll have their portioned dessert. It's not like there's a whole tub there and they could just eat the ice cream but actually they wouldn't do that now because they know that they enjoy those other foods quite long and I wouldn't actually want to miss out on the chicken or the rice, or whatever because it is all just food. At first, when I first suggested that to my husband he looked at me like I was completely nuts and I said the first time I thought I heard about that I was like that sounds crazy but actually when I think

about it, it probably makes a whole lot of sense. That's how we do it but again sometimes it doesn't happen and so we have - whatever that we're trying to break all of that. There's always, you know, we live in a society where there is literally food accessible 24/7 or as much as to food accessible 24/7 so we can't expect that we just keep it out of their way that we're going to be able to teach them to how moderate relationship with it because they're going to go out into the world where it's there and you face it, it's advertised. They've got free company sponsored drinks sports games and it's there so we can't have this mentality by just won't let you have it. We actually have it to have a mentality I'm going to teach you and monitor you how to have a balanced and calm and normal mutual and intuitive way of eating. Our body is still better when we're eating mostly core foods so if we listen to them then when it's like they're overjoyed one there's none, when there's non-core foods.

Brenda: Okay, perfect. Meg, just a couple of more questions if that's okay. How do we address the key change if the child actually has specific health issues?

Meg: It really depends on what we're talking about. If it's deficiency for example, I do would use supplements in that situation to take the pressure off, trying to rush through getting them to eat by eating more things. But since there's pressure it back fires. It actually makes things worse so I'm looking with what can we do as if it's constipation we might use a fiber supplement while we are continuing down the park of increasing their acceptance of fruit and vegetables and wholemeal bread as opposed to white bread or whatever. Looking at stuff that measures a little bit and looking at if it's around sensory things then we might need to have an OT involved to help with that sensory regulation and how do we transition to meals.

If you want to be sitting there and watching TV and all of a sudden it's like sit up for dinner, straight up the back you're siding negatively and so it's unlikely to be a good situation for progressing. Afternoon tea can be an excellent time for that. Non-exposure to food in a positive way that isn't about eating. So there's experiments that you might be doing along with the kids to decide on that. We've had kids looking at the shops until it gets, uh, why is pink salmon more expensive but less expensive than red salmon. I was like, "I don't know," let's learn about it, and let's see if we can figure it out.

If I just put salmon on a rice cracker because I use an accepted food to help with the acceptance of the new food on a rice cracker and this is your afternoon tea, like what, what is this but of course we decided to experiment and we're testing. We're looking do we like the skin, you know, that's the bone, what's bone like. They know

when salmon pops off on the menu, you remember we had it with the rice crackers and then we decided we liked the pink salmon better than the red salmon. I'll go for pink salmon. It's just that stepping them through it, step, step, step. It really depends on this big health issue that we're talking about, what we would choose to do and on resources like what if you actually, you know, what time if you actually got to go into this because it can be time consuming so sometimes other things have take the back seat for a little while. And different families will decide with their problems differently.

Brenda: And do you see fussy teens that has special needs as well? Have you had experience with it?

Meg: Not as much in my private work mostly just because there are fairly good children services with the kids around. When I worked in a hospital, yeah, absolutely, did I start probably practicing group clients and things like that and I think what we need to remember about all whenever we're talking about food choice and nutrition is just how many different influences is there are and even if something is best for example, even if it is best that we eat this way. Sometimes it's not possible, sometimes it's not actually respecting that person's right to make their own decisions and sometimes it's just not the right thing for that person.

My hospital is very client centered actually understanding that our decisions of things aren't always going to be the same as other people's decisions and while making sure they've got the information, they can show that it's being presented in a way that gives them informed consent around their decisions that they're going to make. Letting them make that choice. It's really hard in that transitioning stage from child to adult and the right to actually make their own decisions and their capacity to make their own decisions can get quite tricky ethically. Just taking each day as it comes and being with an open communication and without judgment and just laid out.

What can we do to make the best choices, it won't be the perfect choices but with decisions support people. Meet them where they're at and support them. Support them they are not expect, you know, I don't expect them the way I feed my kids, the way that I eat, the priority that I place on nutrition is actually going to be what other people want to do and I was like that and that's okay. It's all and it's tricky in that teenage becoming their own decision maker stage. Division of responsibility would say while you're in my house, you're my child, it's the way that we do what, where, when and you do how much if any once they're getting more control and more

access if you kept those communication lines open as much as possible then that they're going to be different to help through that.

Brenda: That's the most important thing.

Meg: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely because again nutrition is over a life time, over a life time. Am I perfectly healthy and there's nothing wrong, we're very resilient. Our bodies will adjust and go through what they go through and it's the patterns. It's the patterns that are going to be more important.

Brenda: Just to end, would you have any parting words that you like to share with us about fussy eating at teenagers at all?

Meg: Yeah, pick your battles is probably the biggest one. Some of them are really worth it. Is it worth it forcing the issue about sitting together to eat at least a few times a week, that's absolutely worth it. It may not be worth it or really seek to battle them on what they say they're mighty on once they're working or what they eat when they're at a party or what they--you know. So taking a long view is probably the main, taking away with a long view not letting the noise and the marketing and the fear driven stuff around food influence you in a way they've been actually creates a negative tension with the kids and negative stress. Some things we can't do anything about and that's okay. Be conscious, a lot of self compassion is required because we're all going to make mistakes along the way as well and we need to rather get them down and be sensitive about it actually learn from it and okay what, what went well, what didn't go so well, what do I like to do next time. Yeah, that would probably, be kind to yourself because it's a tough -

Brenda: We all agree with you there Meg that's for sure. Meg, thank you for doing the amazing work that you do it's so wonderful to know that someone like you is out there and more of you are out there and that if people really need extra support that they can come and seek someone like you, and where would we find you?

Meg: Yeah. I might have practice is in Norman Hurst and also in north west Sydney. I do consultations as well and my business is choose nutrition, you can find me on FaceBook. My Twitter and Instagram handler is CN\_MEG and yeah so that you put a file on my links there and my website is [choosenutrition.com.au](http://choosenutrition.com.au) you can type from very infrequent blog but all of these are just things I like to write to and then in reality



hits and I'm like yeah but we'll get there and I used to do some work in school. I mentioned before there's so many different things going on about nutrition and sometimes the way that we teach nutrition could be quite harmful because it's that real black and white, right, wrong, guilt inducing stuff and so teaching nutrition as part of their pediatric course from that big picture of what's actually going on in that culture, and nutrition and dieting, and diets and sort of eating and body image.

Brenda: I'm going to try and get you into the two schools that my kids go to. Thanks again, Meg. It was so nice chatting to you. Thanks for your time.

Meg: Any time.

Brenda: See you

Meg: See you later.