

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #157: ADHD and Nutrition: Separating Fact from Fiction

with Dr. Taylor Arnold

Dr. Taylor: There's no special ADHD diet. That does not exist. That's not a thing. That's not evidence based. Every person with ADHD is unique.

Katie: Hi there. We are The Childhood Collective, and we have helped thousands of overwhelmed parents find joy and confidence in raising their child with ADHD. I'm Katie, a speech language pathologist.

Lori: And I'm Lori.

Mallory: And I'm Mallory. And we're both child psychologists.

Lori: As busy mamas ourselves, we are on a mission to support ADHD parents on this beautiful and chaotic parenting journey.

Mallory: If you are looking for honest ADHD parenting stories, a dose of empathy with a side of humor and practical tools, you are in the right place.

Katie: Let's help your family shine with ADHD.

You love your child with ADHD to the moon and back and would do anything to see them succeed.

Lori: And you're also exhausted from giving approximately 500 reminders to complete the same daily tasks, yelling to get them to sometimes listen, and walking on eggshells to avoid the seemingly constant emotional outbursts.

Mallory: We want you to know three things. You are the right parent for your amazing child. This is hard, but you can do this. And we're here to help.

Katie: We created our online course, Creating Calm, because we saw so many ADHD parents feeling overwhelmed after receiving their child's diagnosis.

Lori: In *Creating Calm*, we teach you simple, step by step strategies to tackle the everyday challenges of raising a child with ADHD. On your own time, at your own pace.

Mallory: We help you create a clear plan to support your child with ADHD and grow them into the happy and resilient person you know they can be.

Lori: Let's work together to help you find confidence in raising an independent child with ADHD. Head to thechildhoodcollective.com/yes and use the exclusive code **PODCAST** for 10% off. You can also find the link and code in the show notes.

Mallory: Today, Katie and I are so excited to have Dr. Taylor Arnold on the podcast to talk about one of our most requested topics, ADHD and food. Dr. Taylor Arnold is a pediatric nutrition expert. She specializes in helping parents nurture healthy relationships with food so their kids eat more veggies and don't obsess over sweets.

Katie: Dr. Taylor is a mom of three. She also has a PhD in nutrition and is a pediatric registered dietitian. She has a YouTube channel with free content and courses for parents about building a healthy relationship with food, picky eating, and infant solids introduction. Her mission is to change the world by making this information accessible and affordable to everyone and to help parents raise the next generation of eaters to love and nourish their bodies. And, Taylor, thank you so much for being here. We are truly so excited to talk to you all about this topic.

Dr. Taylor: It's a pleasure. I am really excited to be here and chat with you guys today.

Katie: Yay!

Mallory: It's kind of exciting to be chatting with someone who's local to us. Usually, we're talking with people across the country, or so we're, you know, we're just next-door neighbors practically. You were posting on your stories the other day 'the scorpion gate'. I'm like, oh, my gosh, we can relate.

Katie: That's so interesting, though, because I feel like that is also specific to what part of Phoenix, we call it the valley, but what part of the valley you live in, right? Because I'm north, and I have never seen a scorpion in real life.

Dr. Taylor: Really?

Katie: No, I think because it's been developed for a long time. But you guys are in the newer areas that aren't, haven't, are a little bit newer development. I don't know, but I've not ever seen, like in the wild, like in my house, or I've never seen a scorpion. I mean, obviously...

Mallory: You're lucky.

Katie: Yeah. You guys have a lot of scorpions. I don't know. I would not handle it well. I really can just say so.

Mallory: Whenever I share scorpion pictures to our Instagram stories, I have, like, personal friends that text me, and they're like, I'm never staying at your house. Like, not happening. It's really not that bad.

Katie: Yeah, it's fine. I'll just bring my blue light. Okay. So you are one of my favorite follows on Instagram. And as a mom, I'm always learning from you, and I just really love your approach to feeding and nutrition for kids. I use a lot of your strategies in my own house. So before we jump into all of our questions about ADHD and nutrition, can you just give us a little background? Tell us about yourself, how you got into this field. If you have a connection to ADHD, we'd love to hear about that.

Dr. Taylor: Yeah. So, well, I started my passion for pediatric nutrition working with kids with PKU, which is a genetic metabolic disorder, and these kiddos have to have a low protein diet. That was during my master's degree, and I just, like, felt I knew I always wanted to work with kids, but I just fell in love with high level care and pediatric nutrition. And then from there, I started with the ketogenic diet for kids with epilepsy, through our local children's hospital, which was also very rewarding. But I kept seeing the same pattern over and over with parents who were struggling with, like, picky eating, especially who had medical conditions in conjunction with that, and possibly that even worsened their selective eating. And so I wanted to be able to reach parents on, like, a larger level, which is when I started, Growing Intuitive Eaters. I started a course. It's a paid course, or was a paid course. And then that just, like, didn't really vibe with me. And so I really wanted to, like, reach as many parents as possible and help as many people as possible. And so I decided to make it completely free. So now all of my courses are free. Nothing's behind a paywall. It's all on YouTube and I'm actually

launching my website later this month, which will also have a blog. So now all of my videos will start to have blog posts in conjunction with that for people who like to read and not just watch videos. I just want to, like, help as many people as possible, and so I continue to try to find new ways to do that.

Katie: I love that. That's cool. And I remember that when you made that shift. I think we were already following your account, and it was a big deal because, you know, we were just starting out on Instagram, and we were kind of like, well, you know, we're here. We all have full time jobs, but we really want to, like, help people, and we were really interested to see how that went for you. And so that's really cool. And I know that it's amazing that you have all that content that's available for families for free.

Dr. Taylor: Thank you. And I forgot my connection with ADHD. I have ADHD. I'm holding my fidget right now, so, you know, I won't really share a lot of details about my kids, but I definitely think that at least two of them will be following my footsteps with that, so.

Katie: I can fully relate. I don't have a fidget today, but I have these little thumb holes on my sweatshirt, so I can fidget with those. It's great.

Dr. Taylor: I also have OCD, too, if you have any, OCD ADHD followers, so.

Katie: Oh, that's very interesting. We just did a podcast on ADHD and OCD, and we got a huge response. I didn't realize quite how many families, but, yeah, we had a huge overlap, so that's a great resource, too.

Mallory: Yeah, there's definitely listeners that can relate to that, for sure. Well, let's just start it off. Let's start off with the big question that we know there's a lot of controversy about this. We hear, we have parents sending us messages all the time. What does the research tell us about specific diets for kids with ADHD?

Dr. Taylor: Okay, so the answer to this question is, like, very unsexy.

Mallory: That's ok.

Dr. Taylor: Not clickbait in the slightest. But the most evidence-based diet for ADHD is a well-balanced diet including plenty of healthy fats, proteins, fruits and vegetables, and

adequate calories. Like, we need to be eating enough, and our kids need to be eating enough, and that's it. I mean, there's not like a special, there's no special ADHD diet. That does not exist. That's not a thing. That's not evidence based. Every person with ADHD is unique, just like every neurotypical person is unique. And there's not, like a one size fits all approach. Some kids might be sensitive to food dyes. Some, most probably aren't. Some kids might be sensitive to, like, high amounts of sugar in their diet. But that goes for kids without ADHD, too. So it, you know, there's no one size fits all. And if you hear that it's a clickbait and you should ignore it or you shouldn't follow that person.

Mallory: Yeah, I think. I think that's really, you're right. It's not a super sexy answer. I think it's a good news answer. But you, there are parents that are being fed a lot of the clickbait and the thing about the clickbait is it does feel like, oh, if I just make this one switch, my child's ADHD is gone or my child will be better. And so it does give parents a lot of hope. So then they do start going down that route of cutting out red dye or whatever, you know, whatever clickbait it was. But then it ends up costing them a lot of money, and it's not sustainable over time, and maybe they really aren't seeing benefits of it. And then they have to switch the whole family off the red dye. And so it gives them a little bit of hope at first cause it feels like it's just one little switch they have to make, and they're going to see this huge progress. But then, for most families, it doesn't quite pan out.

Dr. Taylor: It's also very, like, parent shaming centered, which I hate. I hate to put, like, when people put this idea out there that if you fed your kids x, y and z, their ADHD would be gone or it would be, you know, this is what caused their ADHD and like I will say, I can say unequivocally that there is nothing that you can feed your child that will ever cure them of ADHD. No way you can feed your child, and there is nothing that you have eaten during pregnancy or before that caused your child to have ADHD. And that's just like, it's science. It's a, simple fact of science, so.

Katie: I love that you said that so clearly, and I think we just need to say it louder. We can use that for a few different sound bites here. But I think that that's really, that what you're getting at there, too, is like that sense of shame and that sense of guilt. And I know that it's not, I mean, I hope that it's not intended that way from the people that are trying to help and say, oh, yes, if you only just cut out these food groups or only eat from this very selected menu, but there's so much, so much complexity to it, especially for kids with sensory needs

who have complicated issues around food anyway. And so I think we're going to get into that in a little bit here. But I just want to release parents from that guilt of, oh my gosh, I'm only supposed to feed my child, you know, fruits and vegetables and grass-fed beef, but they won't eat half of that stuff. And I, they just want bread, and I don't know what to do because they're not supposed to have bread. And so it is, it's a cycle and it adds a lot of stress around meal times. And that's what I love about your videos, is the way that, you know, meals are fun and they're not so stressful. And that's huge because I think it's natural to fall into this feeling of, like, I can control this by controlling what my child eats or what I'm offering, and that becomes a cycle of a lot of stress.

Dr. Taylor: Right, right. And I'm not saying that what you eat or what your child eats can't have a positive impact on their quality of life or, I don't know if, like, I don't really think symptoms is the right word since ADHD, I consider it like, it's a neurotype it's not like a disease, but like their, you know, behaviors that they might struggle with can improve if they're, like, well fed and full and not hungry. But, that's not the same thing as, like, curing or preventing ADHD.

Katie: I hear you and I get what you're saying about the word symptoms too, but to say, for example, like inattention, right. It's hard to focus. And if you haven't had protein, it's even harder to focus. You know, your stomach is growling and all that kind of things. So that's, I love that and I love the clarity with which you said that. Another question that we get a lot alongside what diet should I feed my child with ADHD is tell me about supplements. What does the research say? Like, should I be giving my child a bunch of supplements? And, you know, is there any evidence for this? What would you tell a parent?

Dr. Taylor: That's a really great question. So we don't have any evidence to suggest that people with ADHD should universally be taking a supplement. Now kids with ADHD are more prone to like, extreme picky eating, for example and so in that case, if they're missing nutrients from their diet, those should be supplemented. But that's not because they have ADHD, it's because they're missing things from their diet. So if a child is missing, is getting like an inadequate calcium intake or getting inadequate iron intake, yes, they should be supplementing. But I don't think because someone has ADHD, they should be supplementing. So there's a, that's also a very unsexy answer.

Katie: That's okay, that's going to be the title of the show, 'unsexy advice about nutrition and ADHD'.

Dr. Taylor: That's a good one. I like it.

Katie: I'm just kidding. But maybe, I don't know. We'll see where this goes along that same vein then, when you say, you know, if a child isn't getting enough calcium as an example, how would I as a parent know that?

Dr. Taylor: That's really tricky because oftentimes I see parents say like, my kid is picky, therefore they need a multivitamin. But when we look at the actual literature evaluating, like blood nutrient levels for kids who are picky, they tend to have those within normal range. However, picky eating is not standardly defined in the literature. So those research studies may have people who, kids who are like mildly picky, ranging all the way towards kids who have ARFID, which stands for Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder, or potentially they have a pediatric feeding disorder. So, if you are concerned in any way about your child's growth or nutrient needs, you really need to get either your pediatrician or a dietitian on board to help you evaluate. I always use a lot of caution with suggesting that parents do like a diet tracking and entering it into something like Cronometer, MyFitnessPal because there's more than just, like, looking at their nutrient intake for like, three days and then doling out a supplement. Like, we need to look at symptoms, we need to look at their, like, medical history as a whole. So I really, again, unsexy answer. You need to get on, you need to chat with your medical team, because if you're really concerned that your child is so selective that they are experiencing nutrient deficiency, they may also need like, an SLP or an OT on board. They may need eating therapy. They might need more than just like, a calcium supplement. They might need like, a shake that provides them additional calories and additional fat and additional protein. So I worry about parents, like, diving into their kids intake and then prescribing their own supplements. But in the same vein, it's really hard to get into feeding therapy. And dietitians are expensive and hard to access. So, you know, I don't really have a perfect world answer. I wish I could say, go see a dietitian and it was easy and affordable and accessible for everybody, but unfortunately, that's not the case.

Katie: Absolutely. We would run into that too. So as a speech language pathologist, I had a feeding person on my team who was excellent at feeding. But the tricky part for us was we were not working in kind of multidiscipline setting. So she would see the families for an

intake, but then we would say, okay, well, now we need to check for allergies, which means you need to go talk with, like, GI or you know, and have to rule out all these different things. And it becomes, it was always a balance for us clinically between, I have this kid and they insurance is willing to pay for sessions and I want to move forward versus, like, what are all the other disciplines with six month waits that they need to rule out? And so it is, it's kind of like we have the best-case gold standard scenario and then we have real life. So I love that you brought that up because I do think that can be a really big challenge.

Dr. Taylor: And I want to give an example of this, too. So, like, let's say you have your child is so selective that you're worried about their nutrient intake. Oftentimes I see parents see like, okay, my kid is picky, they need a vitamin. But many times, in my experience, many, many times when a child is picky, it's not just because they're, like, being difficult. There is either a sensory component that needs to that where the child needs additional support, or there's an underlying medical condition. And if we're just like blanketting that with a supplement, perhaps we're missing celiac disease, or food allergy, or lactose intolerance, or chronic constipation, or eosinophilic esophagitis or like the list can go on and on and on of all of these medical conditions that can contribute to picky eating. And so if you're so concerned that your child is, like, not growing well, or they're struggling with their nutrient intake, it's definitely worthwhile to get an evaluation, because those things can cause long term damage if they're missed in your kid. And it's definitely worthwhile to get that, comprehensive evaluation if we can access it.

Katie: Yes. And access being the key. So on the supplements really quickly, I know that there is some emerging research around polyunsaturated fatty acids, or PUFA, as some people might call them. Can you just kind of delineate that for us a little bit?

Dr. Taylor: Yes. So the types of fats we'll see saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. Polyunsaturated are omega 3's and omega 6's. Typically, you'll find them in like, a fish oil supplement, or you can find them in like an algae supplement too. Of all the things to supplement in ADHD, that probably has the most evidence. However, the evidence is still not fab. It's just not great.

Katie: It's not sexy.

Dr. Taylor: No, it's not. So I would never just say, yes, you have ADHD, you need to supplement. I would say, okay, let's look at your overall diet and see are we getting in any of those polyunsaturated fatty acids? And if not, perhaps maybe we would supplement. But I don't one, I can't give medical advice over a podcast, so I can't say to the whole world who has ADHD you should supplement with this, but of all the things, it's like the highest ranking. But the evidence is still not great. And, you know, there's polyunsaturated fatty acid supplements like fish oil supplements are super expensive, especially the ones that taste good and aren't, like pills. It's like \$20 for a box that lasts like two weeks, it's so expensive. And, you know, quality matters, particularly for fish oil supplements, quality really matters. So it's hard to find quality ones. Those are even more expensive. And you want to look for ones that have a high omega 3, or like an EPA and DHA proportion within the supplement, that makes it even more expensive. So, you know, they're just, it's tough. I mean, I can't, again, I can't say for everybody, but if your child isn't getting enough in their diet, is it worthwhile to consider and discuss with your medical provider? Possibly.

Mallory: I feel like we're just tapping into, I mean, we're talking about feeding and supplements specifically, but this is just tapping into the broader experience of parents raising kids with ADHD is like, there's just so many options out there and some of these options don't have great evidence base, but it might help your kids if it makes sense. And also, it's just there's a lot for parents that are raising kids with ADHD to kind of weed through and figure out how do I best invest my time, my energy, my money to kind of get reach the, you know, best level of supports for my kid.

Dr. Taylor: Right, right.

Mallory: And it's different for every kid.

Dr. Taylor: I agree. It is. It is and it's hard. And it's different for every parent too. Like, what you have the ability to do, what you have the desire to do. Like, I would, you know, in the line of, like fish oil, it would be a great idea to include fish oil regularly or fish irregular fatty fish in your child's diet. But, like, is that realistic? Like, do you have parents who hate fish or who don't want to cook? Like, so, you know, that also comes into play when you're deciding should I choose a fish oil supplement or not? Like, can you, or do you want to start improving or including that in your child's diet? You know, so there's also that to consider.

Lori: For my kids, the last thing they want to do when they get home from school is homework.

Katie: Totally and the last thing I want to do after a long day of work is deal with the stress of meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking, and cleaning up the kitchen.

Lori: Same here. We tried Hungryroot grocery service to help us eat balanced meals while saving time and money every week. It's been a game changer for our weekly meals and snacks, and I love that you can customize groceries based on your kids or your family's dietary restrictions.

Katie: Yes! My husband eats gluten free and I love that I can customize groceries based on our family's needs. And not only can I get complete meals delivered, but I can also order my weekly groceries through them. And I'm always amazed at how my kids will try new things just because they came out of our Hungryroot box.

Lori: Yes! It's easy to customize your box each week and you can skip weeks whenever you want. For a limited time, Hungryroot is offering our listeners 40% off your first box, which is amazing. Just be sure to use the code: CHILDHOOD40 so you can get the discount.

Katie: We also have the link and the code in the show notes, so you can try Hungryroot today.

Lori: Over the past year, my oldest has really struggled with anxiety, especially at night. As soon as it was time for sleep, she'd be crying for me to stay and worrying about all the things. I was talking to another therapist about our bedtime battles and she said the Zenimal, a screen free meditation device, had been a game changer for her daughter with ADHD and anxiety. I immediately purchased the Zenimal and can confidently say it was the best tool to help my daughter get better sleep. She was able to fall asleep an hour earlier using it.

Katie: Yes, it's actually really helped my kids to be able to calm their busy bodies at night.

Mallory: What we love about the Zenimal is that it combines two of our favorite bedtime recommendations, using a relaxation strategy and removing screens from the bedroom.

Katie: The Zenimal is an adorable screen free turtle with nine guided meditations your kids can choose from. And our absolute favorite part of the Zenimal is that every meditation ends with the most important message, 'you're a good kid.'

Lori: To grab your own Zenimal and get your child and yourself some better sleep, head to Zenimals.com and use our code: TCC for a discount. You can also find the link in the show notes.

Mallory: So something we've kind of alluded to already, but we want to maybe dive a little bit deeper into this, is that kids with ADHD tend to be a little bit more limited in what they eat or they may have specifically foods that they crave often. What recommendation, I know that we could probably spend hours talking about this, but what recommendations would you have for a family whose child is a picky eater or only craves the same foods repeatedly? Like what, and you go into so much more detail about this specific topic and all of your resources, but what broad advice would you have for families that are struggling with this?

Dr. Taylor: Well, can we give the broad advice assuming we've ruled out any potential underlying medical causes of picky eating?

Katie: Absolutely.

Mallory: Let's do that.

Dr. Taylor: Assuming there's no other, like medical pain or discomfort that the child is causing other than maybe sensory needs, because those are so like, common across worlds. I have tons of sensory needs myself. So that's a really good question. I think probably one of the best things for older kids is, my top two advice would be get them involved in cooking with you. That's probably my number one advice. Even if this means, like, toasting their own bagel and putting peanut butter on it in the morning, like, that counts.

Katie: I love it.

Dr. Taylor: Or making scrambled eggs, like, something very, very simple. And then for your teens, teach them how to make, like, an adult lunchable style meal. Teach them how to shop for pre prepared, easy to access, nutrient dense, balanced meals. Like, I don't think we should be teaching our teens with ADHD that they need to, like, by the time they leave for college,

they need to know how to cook these, like, extravagant meals, because that's not realistic for many. If they can, like, throw together an adult lunchable with, like, cheese and crackers and some deli meats and a whole bell pepper and some, like, washed strawberries that they didn't even have to cut up, like, that's a great, balanced meal. You're teaching them how to feed and fuel themselves without going through all the effort. Like, teach that, like, take them to Trader Joe's and be like, hey, we can buy this frozen salmon, and we can buy the frozen brussels sprouts, and you can pop them both in the oven, and it's, like, almost no effort. Almost no effort. So teach them how to fuel themselves in a way that, like, works with their brain is how I would say for older kids. For younger kids, also get them involved in the kitchen, but to help expand the types of foods that they're interested in use play. Play is, like, your number one friend when it comes to exposing your young kids to food, whether it be like, pretending to be animals at the table, counting things, eating dinner, like having a floor picnic in the kitchen, using silly utensils. you know doing that thing where you cover the table with tin foil and you dump the pasta straight onto the table and there's no bowls or plates.

Katie: That totally freaks me out. That's very cute, but I'm over here, like, I can't even imagine it.

Dr. Taylor: Just be silly and fun and, like, that is, like, my number one tip. And I know that there are parents out there who are like, my kid is really struggling with picky eating and like, being silly doesn't do anything for them. What do I do from there? We still have many tools, particularly, like, low pressure exposures, be it like, chopping foods. We can explore foods away from the table, that takes a lot of the pressure away. We can learn about foods through, like, cooking shows and books and any of those things count as exposures, too. And if your kid is that selective, that it's, like, such a struggle for you, which is so common for many parents, be very strategic in which foods you want to work on. So, like, which food fills the nutrient gaps that your child is missing, or, like, which food is so important to your family, or that would make your life immensely easier if your kid would just finally eat that chicken nugget. Like, which, what is that thing for you? And focus your attention on that specific thing.

Katie: And when you say, focus your attention on that specific thing, it might be like in the example of chicken nuggets, having your kid take the chicken nuggets out of the bag and put

them on the plate. And then how long do you want to cook them for? Let's do an experiment in some way making it, so you're still, you're not saying, like, we just need to eat the chicken nugget, but you're making that more play based and interesting to them.

Dr. Taylor: Exactly. And any involvement in any interaction with that food is a win. Even if they don't eat it, it's a win. And while you're doing that, while you're continuing to work on those foods, keep offering those safe foods, because what we don't want to do is, like, withhold those safe foods that your kid needs to, like, not feel hungry all the time, while they're still working on the more challenging foods. They need the support of those safe foods to get them to the point where they can start expanding their diet more.

Katie: That's really tricky, because I know one of my kids in particular is much more resistant to new foods, and my pediatrician has looked me straight in the eye and been like, just don't give him any other foods. Just offer.

Dr. Taylor: That's worst advice.

Katie: That advice kills me because I don't know a ton about this, right. But I'm, like, feeding adjacent through my job. And it's really frustrating to hear parents getting that advice, because that is, that's not right. Especially for kids with ADHD that can be really triggering to not have access to the safe food.

Dr. Taylor: Correct. The advice of, like, just feed them, they won't starve themselves. Yes, they will. Many times they will starve themselves, and then you have bigger problems on your hand. So that is horrible advice, and I think most people should ignore that when they get that.

Katie: Seriously. But if you hear that from your professional, your pediatrician, you're not alone. I think there still is a strong sentiment, like, they won't starve themselves or they'll eat when they're hungry, just make that the available food, and it's, that's really tough.

Dr. Taylor: I think that's partly due to a lack of knowledge of sensory needs. You know, I don't think that the interplay between sensory needs and feeding is not, in my opinion, a super well-known thing in the world of pediatricians or physicians. I think that plays a role in with that advice being so frequently given.

Katie: Yeah. Along the same line of those challenges that are more specific to ADHD families. Let's talk a little bit about sugar. So, as you said, you know, cutting out sugar, that's not necessarily the goal, but there are some kids with ADHD where it truly does become almost like an obsession and wanting sugar all the time. And is that a connection that you've seen in your practice?

Dr. Taylor: Yes. So I have seen that. I've seen people talk about addiction to sugar, and I want to kind of bring that up, too. The science is very not conclusive on that, and we don't really have enough evidence to say that you can actually be addicted to sugar, while it can certainly feel like that. And, you know, I worry that sugar addiction is often, like, people are getting misdiagnosed, like a missing binge eating disorder, for example, or maybe a different type of pediatric feeding disorder, sensory needs. But, yeah, sugar gives you a dopamine rush, makes you happy. And we know people with ADHD are dopamine seekers, and we also know that those executive function skills needed to feed yourself are slower to develop as a child ages. So navigating sugar and sweets absolutely can be more challenging, or it is more challenging with ADHD, in my opinion. But that doesn't mean that we should be all restriction. I don't think that that's also the right approach. I see parents kind of see their kids struggles with sugar and then totally swing in the opposite direction of locking the pantry, we're not offering any sugar in our house at all. And it's okay if your kid likes sugar. Like, my daughter and son love ice cream. Love it. It's like their favorite. They just love ice cream. But that doesn't mean they're obsessed with ice cream. They surely like it. I mean, it tastes good. I don't blame them for liking it. So how to navigate sugar, I think, is very similar to the approach that I recommend to everyone else. Don't moralize it. Be very cautious with the type of language that you use. Serve it with the meal, not after. Don't use it as a bribe or reward. Don't require eating veggies before serving the sugar. But I think that parents with ADHD, when they offer sugar with the rest of the meal, and this goes for parents of picky eaters who don't have ADHD too, have to work even harder to make those other foods more exciting. So, like, if I'm offering cake with dinner, for example, I do things to the other foods to help make my kids feel more comfortable and to enjoy them. So, like, let's say I'm having cake and like steak and broccoli, for example, for dinner. That's like my go to example.

Katie: Uh-huh.

D. Taylor: I would give my child a knife and like, she thinks knives are so cool. She's a big girl when she gets to use a knife, she's like a grown up. And so she gets to cut her steak and now she's interacting with the food. She is exposing herself to the food and it's making that steak more appealing versus if I just put like a slab of cake and like a bunch of cut steak pieces and was like, here you go. Obviously, she's going to want to eat the cake first. I would want to eat the cake first, too.

Katie: Yup.

Dr. Taylor: So does that answer your question? I mean, we still, it's still the same approach that I talk about with other, with non-ADHD kids, but it's harder and it takes longer to implement, which I think I see ADHD parents getting frustrated with that. Like, it's not working for me. And then I want to know, well, how long have we been doing this? Because it can take months, even years to undo, like an emphasis on sugar or demoralizing of sugar. It's really hard to navigate that. So if you feel like it's hard here, it's because it is.

Katie: I love that. If you feel like it's hard, it's because it is. And I think that's a very fair thing to say. Yeah. And I think that that's great, you know, just for parents to have some clarity, because I think you could, there's a lot of different ways to think about it. Like you said, some people might lock the pantry and go to like one extreme or say it's a free for all, you know, and you can have absolutely anything you want. And I know something you've talked about in some of your other videos, too, is like, oh, we just don't have any more of that right now. Like, that's just not what we're eating. And I think that's something that a lot of parents, for whatever reason, it seems so obvious, but it seems hard, too. Like, everyone's had a handful of Oreos. Like, we're just putting the Oreos away because we're done with that. And I think if there's this fear of, like, am I creating a restriction by saying, no more Oreos? Or am I just saying, like, we're just done with the Oreos for today we're going to have them again, you know, soon.

Dr. Taylor: So I usually, I want to clarify, because I usually don't put the Oreos away if I don't have a reason to, like, if I need to save them for the lunchboxes or if we actually, like, ran out of the Oreos, or then I will put them away. But if I have enough and they want to keep eating them, I will continue to offer them. But I am strategic with when I offer the Oreos, with what food I offer them with and how I offer it in the day. So, like, if I know Oreos are coming with dinner and they're probably going to eat a lot of Oreos and not a lot of dinner, I

will give them, like, a mini dinner for their after school snack that's very well balanced. It has berries, it has yogurts with chia seeds, and, like, all of the nutrients that their little bodies need. And so then anything they eat with the Oreos and the dinner is, like, a bonus. You know, I already know that I filled their nutrient cup with that snack, so that's kind of how I approach that.

Mallory: And Oreos are probably not the only safe food on your child's dinner plate as well?

Dr. Taylor: Correct. Absolutely. I want to, yes, if you're offering a dinner, a meal with a safe food, and the only safe food is the dessert, like, you shouldn't be surprised if they only eat the dessert.

Katie: So basically, like, if you're doing that, don't do that.

Dr. Taylor: I mean, you can, but I wouldn't expect, like, that happened the other day. Like, my husband happened to make a cake, and then he also happened to make a meal that the kids don't love. And I was like, well, they're just going to eat a cake for dinner and, like, whatever. We're just moving on with our life, and we'll do something different the next day. But, like, that's not a regular occurrence in our house.

Katie: Yeah, it is, though. And that's actually a lot of strategy for parents to be thinking about, especially parents who have executive functioning difficulties to be like piecing together the whole entire day. And okay, they're going to eat this at dinner, so I need to... I mean, that's, that's a lot, that's a lot for parents to be thinking about.

Dr. Taylor: It's mentally exhausting.

Katie: It is, you're right. And I think it's really important to acknowledge that, that it's just a lot to keep track of.

Mallory: Yeah. And I think another big stressor from the families that we speak with is reduced appetite with their kids when they're taking stimulant medication. There's just a lot of stressors around food for parents that are raising kids with ADHD and this is a big one that we hear. Do you have recommendations for families that have kids that are on stimulant medication that are experiencing the side effect of a reduced appetite?

Dr. Taylor: I do!

Mallory: Awesome. Let's hear it!

Dr. Taylor: I have a whole video, I will send it to you, but I'm going to like summarize real quick. So number one is lean into the hunger that they will get, before they take their meds kick in and at the end of the day. Like those are your windows to pack in the nutrients that they need. What can we offer them at breakfast time to help keep them super full and what can we offer them at dinnertime or even like a bedtime snack that's really a second dinner to help meet those nutrient needs. And then in the middle of the day when their appetite is lowest or their meds are at their peak, lean into like a shake or anything that meets those sensory needs. So if you have like a sensory seeker who really loves crunch, like pack celery and carrots and like Hippea Puffs, those are crunchy. And like crunchy peanut butter if your kid is not at a peanut free school, like lean into those sensory needs and meet the needs with their meal while also trying to figure out what is the most nutrient dense thing that you can offer that also meets those sensory needs too.

Katie: I love that. Yeah, that's so, it can be so challenging for parents and I feel like sometimes if you're someone that has like rigid rules, like, I was always kind of in the mindset of my kids, you know, eat dinner and then we don't really snack. I mean, they go to bed at seven, so there's not really a lot of time for an after dinner snack. And with, I was talking with our doctor and she was like, yeah, I think, you know, giving them that after dinner snack is really important when their appetite is low throughout the day. And so we, I changed that and it honestly made me a happier person because I wasn't stressed. Like, what do you do when they're hungry? And so it really helped me just kind of almost release the rule that I completely made up for myself and not to be so worried about that.

Dr. Taylor: Yeah, but I mean, it's hard. You had that rule because you wanted to bedtime to stay at seven and you need your time too.

Katie: Um yeah. Yes, I do.

Dr. Taylor: So it's hard to make that shift. But we recently made a shift too. Like, we started offering dinner a little bit later and then offering like a bigger after school snack that ends up being just kind of like a tiny meal or like a second lunch. And that has been really great for

our family too. So we just got to play with what works and what works now it might not be what works in a year or two, so it's like a constantly changing thing.

Katie: Yeah. For me it was, my kids were in after school sports and so they were just working up such an appetite.

Dr. Taylor: Yeah.

Katie: So. And you know, it was helpful for me. Just, yeah, exactly. Like you said, it can change and, you know, in six months it'll look different so you can have total confidence that it'll continue to change. I love it. Well, thank you so much, Taylor. This has been honestly so amazing and so helpful for me and I know a lot of our listeners are going to want to find you and follow along and check out all those free resources. So, we're going to go ahead and share a lot of your links in the show notes, but are there any specific things that you wanted to kind of point them towards with your resources?

Dr. Taylor: I do have specific things. So number one would probably be my YouTube page. I'm on YouTube at Growing Intuitive Eaters, that's where I host all my courses. So I have one on how to raise an intuitive eater like and/or a kid with a healthy relationship with food, how to address picky eating, starting solids if you have a baby, constipation, how to transition from formula to milk. And then my current course that's slowly being released is called feeding kids with ADHD and I'm covering all of these topics we talked about today. I'll have multiple videos on all the different supplements. I'm going to be talking about sensory needs, how to navigate school lunches. I'm going to be talking about interoception, I'm going to be talking about how to build a balanced plate, how to navigate having a team with ADHD and what to focus on teaching them and medications with ADHD and how to navigate that low appetite. So definitely check that out because it's all free. And I'm also on Instagram @growing.intuitive.eaters and on TikTok @dr.taylorarnold

Katie: Wow.

Mallory: I know all of our listeners are going to be zooming over to your YouTube channel and you know, once you decide you like, want support in a particular area, you want it right away.

Dr. Taylor: Yes.

Mallory: So I love that our listeners are going to be able to just like dive right in and find lots of answers that already exist.

Dr. Taylor: Thank you. I think it's pretty good, so.

Mallory: It is. I'm a consumer of your YouTube channel. It is very helpful. So I'm really excited for more of our listeners to learn about what you have to offer. I really appreciate your time.

Dr. Taylor: Thank you. It was a pleasure chatting with you ladies.

Katie: Thanks for listening to Shining with ADHD by your hosts, Lori, Katie, and Mallory of The Childhood Collective.

Mallory: If you enjoyed this episode, please leave us a review and hit subscribe so you can be the first to know when a new episode airs.

Lori: If you are looking for links and resources mentioned in this episode, you can always find those in the show notes. See you next time!