

Save Your Sanity – Change Your Child’s Diet Tips

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Is it even possible that changing your child’s diet or your diet could save your sanity? If someone had told me that ten years ago, I would not have believed it. Therefore if you don’t believe it either, I can completely appreciate that. My second son, Noah, showed symptoms for food allergies as a nursing infant. As he grew, I could literally change his personality by giving him a very tiny amount of the wrong food. I have written more on this subject in other places on the website, which you can download for free. Had I realized back then that changing your diet to feel better or to resolve a health issue went back as far as Hippocrates and that it was medically based, I would not have had such skepticism.

Issues that could potentially be addressed by dietary changes:

- whining and complaining
- aggression
- irritability
- sleep problems
- behavior issues
- learning problems
- emotional meltdowns and problems
- chronic infections
- negative dispositions
- inattention (ADD)
- hyperactivity and ADHD
- temper tantrums
- many health issues (gastrointestinal, headaches, acid reflux, etc.)

Would it be worth considering a change in diet to have a calm, relaxed and well-behaved child? As far as I can tell, you would have nothing to lose save for an investment of your time and money, which offer significant advantages since many of the pharmaceutical drugs given to children to manage behavior contain either side effects of some concern or black box warnings.

Skeptics can download a free white paper titled ‘A Brief History of Food Allergies’ from my website and read the rich history on what internationally known physicians have said about food and food allergies for over 2,500 years. It really is quite remarkable that these facts are not more widely known by the general public. Doubting consumers would also be well advised to visit The Feingold® Association website, www.Feingold.org, to review the many medical studies on how food dyes, additives and preservatives can impact the health, behavior, cognitive processing and well being of humans. The Feingold Association, which is a nonprofit group of mostly volunteers, has been at work in this area since 1976.

Another resource for interested consumers are the books written by Dr. Doris Rapp, M.D. Dr. Rapp, www.DrRapp.com, has been a physician for over 50 years. She is board certified in three fields of medicine: allergy, pediatrics and environmental medicine. Who are you talking to that is even board certified in two fields, let alone been a practicing physicians for five decades? Dr. Rapp's book, "Is This Your Child?", which is a national bestseller offers parents, educators and interested professionals wisdom and guidance on how allergies can affect health, behavior and learning ability in children. This book is widely available in public libraries across the U.S.

What is offered here are tips on where to begin to save your sanity. I know from dealing with mothers for such a long time, is that it can be beyond frustrating to deal with some children. If these tips provide value to you please let me know. As long as credit is given as listed above, the contents of this document may be freely shared on websites, blogs, and in publications. Credit constitutes the copyright symbol along with the author's name, title and website address as listed above.

Where Do I Start? This is a great question with no easy answers. I will make some brief recommendations with the understanding that I have already written 100 pages of information in my cookbook to help people get started and be successful. If you are considering the gluten-free and/or dairy-free diet for yourself or your child due to health symptoms, behavioral issues, emotional problems or cognitive functioning issues, good for you! You could opt to start with the Feingold Association Diet (not gluten-free or casein-free), which removes certain food additives, preservatives and chemicals from the diet. What matters most is that you *simply begin*.

Step 1: I recommend that you begin by seeing your primary care physician or pediatrician and ruling out celiac disease and IgE allergies. Celiac disease is currently one of the most under-diagnosed, if not the most under-diagnosed disease in the U.S.

About 97% of the people in the U.S. who have celiac disease don't currently realize that they have it according to the University of Chicago Celiac Disease Program. If celiac disease, which is an autoimmune disease with a genetic component, is the underlying cause or source of your health issues, it would be really, really good to know that, medically speaking. Years down the road, you don't want to be wondering if you or your child actually has celiac disease. Because celiac has a genetic component, it would be valuable for you or your relatives to know if you or your child has celiac disease.

Step 2: After ruling out celiac disease and/or IgE food allergies, assuming you are agreeable to that recommendation, you can then select one of several options to try to assess what is contributing to your health issues, behavioral issues, cognitive functioning problems or emotional issues. Here are some of the options you have:

Elimination Diet: As the name implies, an elimination diet is one where you remove many or most common foods. Once you have removed most foods, you then re-introduce foods to see if symptoms return or get worse. This requires diligence and many people find it uncomfortable as the elimination diet offers few foods for consumption. I have not

found many parents willing to do an elimination diet, although if you are willing, this can be a helpful option.

Remove Gluten and/or Dairy from the diet: In this option you remove either gluten or dairy or both. Gluten and dairy are two of the foods that seem to impact many people, so I recommend if you are going to do this to remove both for a period of 6 weeks minimum with 3 months being a preferred period. If you are going to try the gluten-free or gluten-free and dairy-free diet, please watch my video and download my free tip sheet on getting started on the Gluten-free diet, which you can find on my website under the 'Resources' drop-down menu under 'Papers, articles and videos' tab.

Gluten and dairy remain in the human body longer than other foods, and if you don't remove it for a long enough period, you won't be getting a valid test. If you are going to do this, by all means get a copy of my cookbook so you don't have to suffer through it. You can have outstanding gluten-free and dairy-free foods, so if you are going to try this option, give it a good go by getting resources so it is as easy as possible. If the symptoms are improved or eliminated by being on a gluten-free and/or dairy-free diet, you can then introduce gluten or dairy, one at a time, to see if they bring on the symptoms you are addressing.

Food Diary: This is another investigative tool that is non-invasive. It takes time, commitment and patience. In this option, you write down what you eat, how much of each food and any symptoms, behaviors or emotional states in a journal. Often by keeping a food diary, people can start to see patterns emerge and they can then make educated guesses as to what might be the source. If you notice that you feel tired two hours after every meal that might be helpful. If you change what you eat and notice that you are energized, that would also be of value.

Food colorings, additives & preservatives: In some instances, individuals or parents will see improvements in emotional, cognitive, physical or behavioral functioning by simply removing food colorings, additives, and preservatives. The rule of thumb here is if you can't pronounce it, if you don't know what it is or does, or it says coloring – it falls into this category. The Feingold Association, www.feingold.org has a program to help parents and professionals in this area. You can purchase their outstanding program or become a Feingold Association member through their website. They are a very reputable organization, and I highly recommend their program, organization and website!

I'm Still Confused: Where Do I start? There simply is no easy answer to this question. The important thing is just to begin somewhere. You can start with any one of the options I have outlined above. It depends on your personality, your situation, and your time and resources and what you are willing or unwilling to do. When parents read the package inserts of some of the ADD or ADHD medications and see some of the serious and/or life-threatening side effects, many of them become willing to spend some time and energy investigating natural, non-invasive dietary changes. It is unfortunate that there are no easy answers and no one-size-fits-all solutions when it comes to dietary

intervention. Two of my three children require the gluten-free, dairy-free and allergen-free diet for their cognitive processing, emotional well being, and health. Two of them are also highly reactive to food colorings and preservatives. They don't all react the same to the offending foods. I wish I could make it easier. What I have done with my cookbook is to put all the important information about special diets, ingredients, and the basics of what you really need to know in the first 100 pages. There are over 225 outstanding recipes. Just because you are on a limited or restricted diet doesn't mean that you have to tolerate bad foods! We have great tasting foods free of all gluten, dairy, eggs, tree-nuts, peanuts, and other allergens (Over 75% of the recipes are also free of soy and corn).

Will it affect people in our household who don't have these issues? If you are changing your diet because of celiac disease or to improve health issues, you will have control over how it affects the people in your household. This is an area where not everyone does the same thing. Some families cook two separate meals, one free of gluten and dairy and one meal that contains gluten. I am unwilling to cook two different meals, and my children all have different food requirements. My daughter has life-threatening food allergies to all dairy, eggs, peanuts and tree nuts. My one son will get a nice rash from eggs, but eggs won't kill him. I cook to the lowest common denominator, which means that the meals for my children are free of all gluten, dairy, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts and coconut (the coconut is for me!). You may be willing to make two meals as many families do that. It will be a change for sure. However what I can say with all honesty is that people do dietary changes because they see the results and it is safe.

I have other questions - can I contact you?

You may certainly contact me. One of the best ways to contact me is by posting a question on my Blog. I read every Blog comment in a timely fashion. While I read e-mail as much as possible, there are times when I get behind in e-mail. I encourage questions from both customers and the general public because I have a commitment to help people be successful with using dietary interventions. I use the questions people ask to create new documents to support everyone.

In addition to contacting me, there are other resources. I highly recommend new consumers join a support group. There are gluten-free support groups depending upon where you live. The Feingold® Association, www.Feingold.org, is a fantastic resource for individuals who are avoiding preservatives, additives and food dyes. The Gluten Intolerance Group of North America, www.GLUTEN.net, and The Celiac Spru Association, www.CSAceliacs.org, are two national organizations that can support gluten-free diets.

What is happening in the allergy, gluten-free, and specialized diet market is that there is an abundance of new self-proclaimed experts entering the field. I advise that you use "Buyer Beware" tips, available on my website, to bone up on how to decide who has credibility and who might not be someone you should listen to. There are cookbooks on the market that state "gluten-free" on the cover, yet they actually contain gluten in the recipes. We can be in agreement that this is not appropriate, but that does not change the fact that this is the case and it has been the case for over 25 years. Consumers

frustrated by purchasing a “gluten-free” cookbook only to find out that it actually contains gluten were left with no recourse until recent years where they can now at least post a public comment on Amazon.com, and other websites.

In this growing market, it is wise for buyers to beware of what they are purchasing, whom they are listening to, and what motives might be in the background. Until proven otherwise, I advocate that you get your medical advice from a physician and other information from a credible source, which is not the easiest thing to decipher – the very reason I created the “Buyer Beware” video and tip sheet. The “Buyer Beware” video and tip sheet talk about things worth knowing if you are considering the gluten-free diet.