

Article: Use of Props During Mealtime for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Self-Regulation and Reinforcement

Authors: Jessica Muesbeck, Brittany M. St. John, Shannon Kant, and Karla K. Ausderau

<p><u>Key Points:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Limited research is available regarding family strategies to support mealtime engagement- The use of props during mealtime for families can be one way to support interaction between caregiver and child- There is no "correct" method to increase engagement during mealtime	<p><u>Glossary:</u></p> <p>Props: items used to support child participation during mealtime, items that a parent intentionally used</p> <p>Regulation: an overarching purpose to complete a goal, can include sensory and/or behavioral components</p> <p>Reinforcement: method to strengthen and encourage a pattern of behavior, commonly through use of rewards</p>
<p><u>Why this article matters:</u></p> <p>Mealtime interactions are important times for family development and relationship strengthening. Several factors contribute to autistic children having difficulty during mealtime. This article provides different options for parents/OTs to keep children engaged at the dinner table.</p>	
<p><u>Description of the Study:</u></p> <p>The research team analyzed mealtime videos of autistic children and their families. The team looked at a total of 12 families and 14 children. Families were asked to have family mealtime as they normally would. Researchers then determined whether families used "props" to keep their children engaged and at the table. Coding and data analysis was performed to review and analyze the data.</p>	
<p><u>Research Questions:</u></p> <p>How does the use of Props between parent and child help support engagement in family mealtime?</p>	
<p><u>Important Results:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Props were used by 75% of the families and showed to be important markers for child participation during mealtime- Two themes showed how props were utilized by parents and their children at mealtime. Props that supported children and their <u>regulation</u> helped calm and support the child. Props that were used as a <u>reinforcement</u> to positive eating and behavior were less common among families.- Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the effectiveness of props could not be determined. Props are still important to consider in future studies with autistic children and mealtime participation	
<p><u>How the results will be used:</u></p> <p>These results can be used by OTs and parents to help support mealtime engagement in autistic children.</p>	