

## Is this an eating disorder? No its an easier life

Hi, I am Richie and I have autism I want to share what eating food means to me. I have 4 takeaways a week. The reason why I have these are for a few reasons.

I don't always remember to eat, especially through the day if I am watching something or I am that focused on what I am doing I tend not to eat. When I do eat I always eat the same thing I like to eat takeaways and go to places like KFC or Mc Donald's. The reason I like to do this is for one big reason, I know what I am going to get and what size, shape, feeling and the smell of this food and the texture in my mouth. Places like this have a spec sheet to make that food and you know what you are getting and what this place will look like. Going out in public places can be hard but I know one thing that if we go to the same place all the time the anxiety and sensory processing I am aware of will be the same all the time and I can manage myself better.



My whole world is sensory processing, sometimes I worry that eating disorders are taken the wrong way. Its clear to see I like crispy things and dry food that really has a good crunch. Whereas if I am having a wet dish (Spag Bol) then I love it with loads of sauce. I don't like food in-between almost like the black and white I see the world every day.

**Eating is not just giving your body fuel it's a process of a lot more.** I like to know what texture is coming into my mouth I don't like surprises. For example, a fajita wrap (I love them but due to **not having** a regular feeling as every bit is different we now don't have them) but when we did, if that pepper got between my teeth that feeling of biting down on it can make me feel sick and I can't eat the rest of the wrap. The wrap is too much of a mix between crunch and wet (crunchy wet mix). Another is a classic onion ring I love them but if I see the onion inside or it comes out then it really does cause issues and I can't eat the rest.

Taste of food is completely different to the texture of the food, mix in some anxiety with meal time or going to a new restaurant, then this really does have an impact on my food and autism.

A lot of veg needs to be boiled or steamed to cook it even fresh tomatoes or cucumbers all have a different texture. Not to think of all the different ways veg can be cooked or how someone cooks it. But a lovely fryer makes everything crunchy. Just like when you order a steak get it well done and it's going to be pretty much the same, as for it medium rare everyone has a different medium rare.

### **Stick with black.**

Food quantity is also an issue, I don't know when to stop I can keep eating and eating until I am sick. I can eat that much I need to go be sick. If I am getting some positive stimming from eating this can look like obsessing eating. That's one of the main reasons I like to eat the same food over and over (Stimulation).

The sad thing is I still eat the same thing over and over when I want something else, I am so scared to get something else or try something new, in case the textures are too much. This causes a meltdown. If I was to eat KFC every day I would be a very happy man, as I know when I get it the taste and texture is the same every time not only that the store that sell it are all the same the toilets are at the same place, same tiles, handles, wall art etc. **This is one place I know I can be ok at.**

I love routine, routine can cause me food problems as if it's a routine on a Tuesday night to go for food then I struggle to change this and if I couldn't I would be more than happy not to eat. There have been several times where I have not been able to due to it being closed and this has caused me so much anxiety and caused me to cry. Knowing that as the day goes on no matter how overloaded my day has been if I compress until tea time I know that I can let my guard down as I know where am going and what to expect and I know my anxiety is going to be ok. But then you tell me its closed. Then this causes total crazy mind meltdown that thing I was holding on to all day has gone.



**We have a thing called a sensory diet, but food is part of this sensory diet.**

**Over Eating** = Obsessed and can be me stimming using food

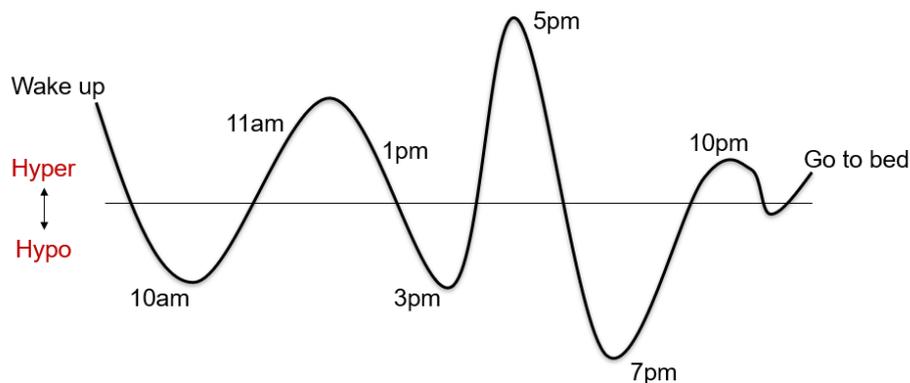
**Undereating** = Forget to eat as can be involved in completing my routine this may not be in my routine for the day

**Stop Eating** = Something could have been different and caused anxiety and scared me to try again, realising that if I don't eat then I don't have to worry about the texture, smell, taste, anxiety of the whole thing. (This is all gone and less for me to worry about in my day of getting to the end of the day.

**Eating the same thing only** = Relaxed understanding bring me to my happy level and worry free can enjoy this part of the day.

**Always Hungry** = Forgetting that I have just eaten, same as over eating my brain doesn't send messages to say I am full it just wants to help me balance the day. For some people if you know something helps reset your day why would you not want to keep doing the same thing.

**Sensory Battle that effects me everyday**



**Food plays a massive part of my sensory battle if I had it my way I would eat the same thing every day for the whole year as that's one less thing to worry about or manage. (Even on the days I want a pizza I wont order it because its not worth the overload or anxiety and mental health it brings.)**

**Thank you Richie Smith Awsometistic**