

New Parenting Guide Challenges Common Assumptions About Persistent Fussy Eating

The Fussy Eater Reboot explains how sensory sensitivities, anxiety and threat responses can shape food refusal, and offers parents a practical way forward.

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Feeding specialist and author Marie-France Laval has released [*The Fussy Eater Reboot: Confident Eating: A Parenting Plan for Stubborn Picky Eaters*](#), a practical guide for families experiencing persistent fussy eating, food anxiety, sensory sensitivities and food avoidance.



The Fussy Eater Reboot – Promotional Material with quote

Drawing on her professional background in dietetics, nutrition, social work and hypnotherapy, Marie-France combines nutritional, behavioural and psychological perspectives to explain what may sit beneath a child's food refusal.

“

Food refusal is not always defiance. For many children, it is protection.”

Marie-France LAVAL

The book challenges the idea that children reject food simply because they are stubborn, difficult or not hungry enough. Instead, it explores how sensory sensitivities,

anxiety, avoidance and protective threat responses can shape a child's experience of food before they have even tasted it.

Many parents feel they have tried everything, from encouragement and rewards to bargaining, separate meals and immediately replacing rejected food. Despite their efforts, the child's diet may become increasingly restricted and mealtimes more stressful.

“Parents work incredibly hard to help their child eat,” Marie-France said. “But logical strategies such as pressure, bargaining or immediately replacing rejected food can unintentionally keep the difficulty going. The aim is to reduce pressure and create the conditions in which confidence and

food skills can develop.”

The Fussy Eater Reboot explains:

- why some children reject food before tasting it
- how sensory sensitivities and anxiety influence eating
- how fight, flight and freeze responses can appear around food
- the role of avoidance, accommodation and protective routines
- why pressure can make food refusal stronger
- how parents can respond without coercion
- how children can gradually build familiarity, confidence and practical food skills

The guide is relevant to families supporting children with [persistent picky or fussy eating](#), food anxiety, sensory-based eating difficulties, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, commonly known as ARFID, and other feeding concerns.

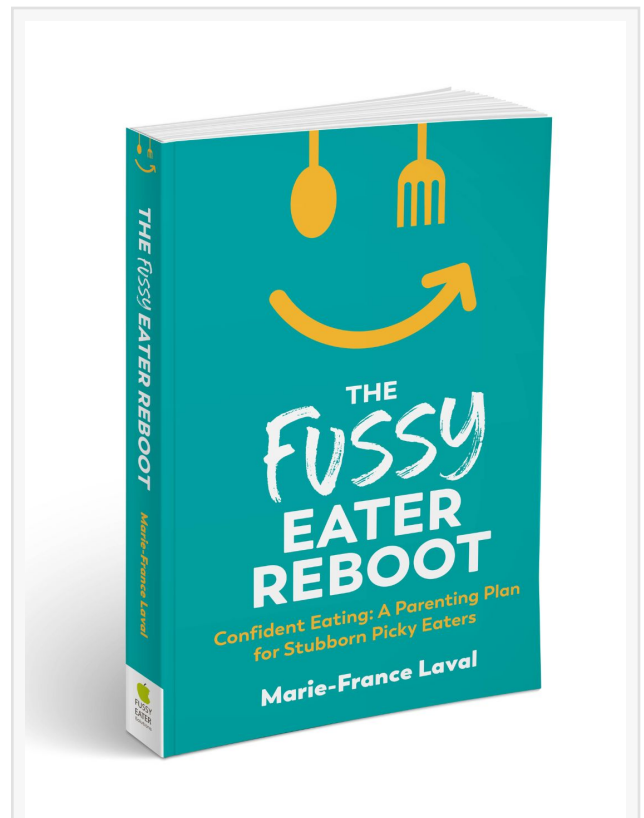
Marie-France noted that many parents feel a sense of relief when they understand that a child may not be deliberately choosing to be difficult.

“A child can look calm at the table while still experiencing food as a psychological threat,” she said. “Food refusal is not always defiance. For many children, it is protection.”

The book also examines two responses that can appear to be opposites: pressure and accommodation.

Pressure may include repeated prompting, bargaining, praise, rewards or requests to take one more bite. Accommodation may include preparing multiple replacement meals or organising family routines around an increasingly narrow range of accepted foods.

Both responses are understandable attempts to



The Fussy Eater Reboot – 3D book cover



The Fussy Eater Reboot Book – front page cover

help. However, Marie-France explains that they can sometimes reinforce the child's expectation that the food or eating situation is difficult or unsafe.

Rather than focusing on winning individual bites, **The Fussy Eater Reboot** gives parents a step-by-step framework for reducing conflict, recognising protective patterns and supporting food learning away from pressured mealtimes.

The book has been endorsed by professionals working with children and families.

Consultant paediatrician Dr Liam Tjia said Marie-France's work combines dietetic expertise with the skills of psychotherapy, describing the book as an expression of her deeply humane clinical expertise.

Psychologist and author Michael Hawton described it as a practical guide that supports parents, reduces stress and helps transform mealtimes.

Marie-France Laval is a feeding specialist, author, and founder and CEO of [Fussy Eater Solutions](#). With a professional background in dietetics, nutrition and social work, she supports children, adolescents, adults and families experiencing persistent fussy eating, sensory sensitivities, food anxiety, ARFID and other feeding difficulties.

She is also an Australian-accredited hypnotherapist and uses evidence-informed therapeutic approaches to help address anxiety, avoidance and protective responses around food.

Marie-France wrote **The Fussy Eater Reboot** to make her clinical insights and practical framework more widely accessible to families.

The Fussy Eater Reboot is available in paperback and ebook formats through Amazon, major ebook retailers and Fussy Eater Solutions.

Marie-France is available for television, radio, podcast, print and online interviews, with in-person interviews available in Melbourne. Review copies, high-resolution book images, author photographs and additional media resources are available on request.

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