

 **Tots to Teens**  
therapy services

# TOTS TALK

VOL. 36 November 2024

## Trunk or Treat 2024

### UPDATES

- This month's newsletter will be highlighting Thanksgiving Dinner strategies
- Trunk or Treat & Spirt Week highlights
- Both Clinics will be closed for the Thanksgiving Holiday, Thursday November 21, and Friday November 22
- Exciting things are happening at Tots to Teens. Check us out on Facebook and Instagram to stay connected.





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## Thanksgiving Dinner Strategies



### 1. Thanksgiving Day Menu

We all have traditions we follow, especially for Thanksgiving. We suggest that you think about your child, think about the menu, and decide what adjustments are going to be best for your family. Typically, Thanksgiving has a lot of mushy, sort of casserole type textures, like sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, and creamed corn. Many kids struggle with those thick, soft textures. Those textures tend to agitate or heighten the gag reflex when they eat those foods. Whether Thanksgiving will be served at your house or if you will be going to someone else's home to celebrate, make sure to offer or bring at least one food that you know your child will like. This way, your child is guaranteed to eat something during the meal; it also shows your child you care about their preferences when planning meals.

### 2. Have a Test Run

If you're concerned about particular menu items, serve a practice meal with your kids including many sights, aromas, and sounds of Thanksgiving Day. Once a food is accepted, find similarly colored, flavored, or textured "food bridges" to expand the variety of foods your child will eat. If your child likes pumpkin pie, for example, try including mashed sweet potatoes on their Thanksgiving plate.

### 3. Make it look, smell, and taste delicious

Many times, kids think that they won't like a food before they actually try it. Try making a Thanksgiving dish look, smell, and taste as delicious as you can. This will up the odds that your child will try it out, like it, and come back for more. Do this by adding fragrant ingredients such as a nutmeg and cinnamon to cooked apples—for example—or preparing a veggie tray with the vegetables arranged in the shape of a turkey.

You can also look at pictures of the menu items and ask your kiddo if that's something they'd like to try. If they're willing to try, try it at home first. And of course, if there are certain things you clearly know they're not going to eat, bring a substitute. Maybe pick one item for the meal that everyone's going to eat, for your child to eat.

### 4. Communicate with your family and friends

Inform your fellow Thanksgiving diners that you have been working on picky eating strategies and will not be forcing your child to eat or bribing them with dessert. Make sure to talk about this away from the table and away from your child. Kindly ask them to let you handle mealtime dynamics instead of stepping in themselves. They simply want to help, but the strategies they have used on their kids may be contradictory toward your end goal.

### 5. Keep portion sizes tiny.

Encourage them to just take a small amount to start so they don't end up wasting food. Do not pressure kids to eat, or not eat, robs them of respect and an important sense of control over their bodies. Plus, it doesn't teach them how to self-regulate.

### 6. Set expectations low and stay in the moment.

Your child might be overwhelmed by so many things: experiencing new smells, the timing of the meal, their chair might not be perfect, there are way too many people talking at the same time, and the visual stimulus of candles, glassware, people, and food on the table. It is a lot to take in. Keep your expectations low and enjoy the things you can control, like staying present with your family and having food on the table. The rest will all fall into place. Don't expect your child to be a marvelous eater or sit there for the entire meal.





# Halloween Spirit Week

Thank you to everyone who was able to participate.

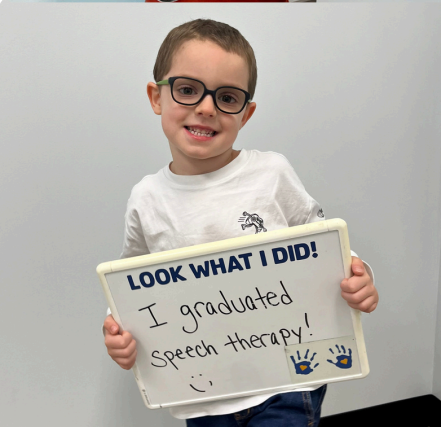
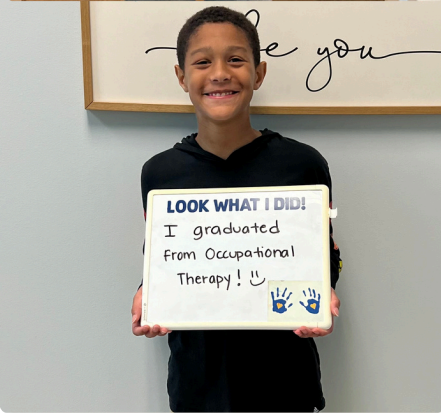






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# GRADUATIONS



## Fall



## Saturday

## Session

### November 16th

You all have asked, and we have heard! We are going to be open on Saturday, November 16th for speech, occupational and physical therapy sessions.

**Our hours of operation will be 9-5pm (last sessions ending at 5pm).**

**PLEASE NOTE: ALL SESSIONS WILL TAKE PLACE AT OUR WOODBRIDGE LOCATION:  
12581 Milstead Way Suite 302  
Woodbridge, VA 22192**

This would be an excellent opportunity to make up missed sessions (especially for our school age kiddos) or to preload make up visits prior to the holidays.

Please contact [cancel@totstoteenstherapy.com](mailto:cancel@totstoteenstherapy.com) or call the front desk to be placed on the schedule. Don't wait...these will fill up quickly!

### Free Screening Coupons !!

**Contact the front desk for more information.**

**Screening Coupons attached to Newsletter Email.**





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## NEWEST MEMBERS OF OUR TEAM

So Excited you are here!



**Katarina Meinzing**

Katarina completed her Bachelor's degree in Psychology at Washington State University and later completed her Master's in Speech-Language Pathology at the George Washington University. Before joining the team at Tots to Teens, she completed internships in acute care and at Kennedy Krieger's center for autism. During her free time she enjoys reading, hiking, painting, and considers herself an amateur bird watcher.



**Sara Smith**

Sara received her Master of Business Administration from DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. With many years of experience in management, she will be handling Human Resources for Tots to Teens. Sara has lived in Northern Virginia for 16 years with her family. As a mom of three, she has received both speech and occupational therapy services for her children. She enjoys reading, spending time with friends, and family vacations.

### **Christina's** **Corner**

### **Tots Families!**

Just a reminder the clinics will be closed on **Thursday, November 21** and **Friday, November 22** for the Thanksgiving holiday.

**Daytime openings for OT and SLP at  
Dumfries and Woodbridge Clinics**

Tots to Teens does not follow the public school schedule regarding closures for holidays, inclement weather closures, early dismissals, etc. If your child has a day off from school and you need to cancel, switch to a virtual visit, or would like to see if an earlier time is available for that day, please email [cancel@totstoteenththerapy.com](mailto:cancel@totstoteenththerapy.com)