

Parent Child Journey

An Individualized Approach to Raising Your Challenging Child

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Sixth Mile: Motivation through Rewards

Why Give Rewards? In this last of three Miles on motivation strategies, our discussion of rewards will be based upon one fundamental idea: Reward systems modify a child's behavior by first modifying adult behavior. How so?

1. Clarity
2. Preparation
4. Custom design
5. Feedback
6. Monitoring
7. Responsibility
8. Independence

The Job

- The job list: First, decide what requires a reward
 - Do not put something on the job list if you can fix it otherwise
 - Create a job list
 - “Start” and “stop” behaviors
- Tracking job performance
 - Record:
 - Recording for “start” behaviors
 - Recording for “stop behaviors”
 - “Trial period” or “ready-set-stop”
 - “Cost-response” or “yours to lose”
 - Baseline probe
 - The cost of failure to stop
 - Measuring success
 - Communication
 - Tracking:
 - Responding to poor progress
 - Promoting consistency and progress
 - Rewarding independence and self-responsibility

Different kids, different rewards

- perishable (edible treats) or nonperishable (prizes)
- material things (Lego pieces, toys) or favorite activities (blowing bubbles, bubbles)
- quiet, intellectual stimulation (books, puzzles) or adrenaline rushes (trampoline, video games)
- simple and immediate or more elaborate and complicated
- Immediate rewards vs. delayed rewards
- Novel and varied rewards vs. familiar and predictable rewards
- Turn assumed rights into earned privileges

- Should some types of rewards be avoided?

Home economics for older children

- What is each job worth?
- Bonuses and job promotions
- The family budget
- Daily and weekly maximum possible wages
- What does each reward cost?
- Consistency:
 - Follow-through
 - Planning
 - No take-aways
- Siblings and fairness
- Children and money
 - Spending and carrying
 - Saving
 - Charity
 - Money and natural consequences

Homework for the Sixth Mile

1. Which situations or behaviors are still problems because of your child's unwillingness? For each, decide which of the motivation strategies (alone or in combination) is probably going to work best:
 - a. positive attention
 - b. spacing and fading
 - c. natural consequences
 - d. logical ("first-then") sequences
 - e. rewards

Remember, not all children need reward systems for all their problems. Don't forget to keep up time-in. Stay mindful of securing your child's engagement and understanding. Integrate and layer these strategies according to your child's unique needs.

2. If you need to use rewards for some of the items on your list, start with a problem behavior or situation that's relatively simple. You can always add on later.
 - a. What jobs or behaviors do you want to target first? Create a very clear job description.
 - b. What rewards will be most motivating for your child?
 - c. Set up a reward system. Only implement after you've prepared carefully. Make it tight.
 - d. If it's a complicated system, consider getting some help or at least running it by someone else.
 - e. Then, see how it works. Modify as necessary.