

Reward System Guidance

Purpose: The goal of a reward system is to encourage and motivate your child to engage in tasks or activities they are otherwise not motivated to do.

Preparation:

1. Answer the question, 'What do I want my child to achieve?'. I.e., identify goal.
 - a. E.g., Engage in household tasks, complete morning routine, etc.
2. Identify the tokens based on your child's preferences
3. What is the reward chart going to look like? Plan this with your child, if appropriate.
4. What are the **specific** things your child needs to achieve to earn a token?
 - a. Example of **clear** expectations, 'Wash hands', 'share toy with brother', 'keep hands to myself during meal time', 'put shoes on', etc.
 - b. Examples of **unclear** expectation: 'behave', 'be nice to your brother', 'be respectful', etc.
 - c. Set your child up for success!

Implementation:

1. If appropriate, show your child the reward chart and explain its purpose.
 - a. Review expectations
 - b. Ensure the expectations are something your child has demonstrated they are able to do and understand. If they cannot do it, then you may need to consider the level of support needed for them to be able to successfully meet the expectation or teach skill beforehand.
 - c. Make sure to vary the level of difficulty of the expectations. Having the last expectation be something your child can easily achieve can further increase motivation.
2. Pair tokens with reward. Begin by using only one token (i.e., one expectation), as soon as your child has met the expectation, show them that they have earned a token and immediately give them the reward. Do this on multiple occasions so that the message is clear, token = reward. Once this is successful, add a second expectation/token.
 - a. The amount of tokens you will build up towards will be based on your child's ability to 'wait' for the reward. It is easier to start small, then build as opposed to starting big and having to scale back.
3. Provide a lot of praise when your child has earned a token/met the expectation (keep tokens on the board until the child has earned them all)
4. Exchange the tokens for the reward as soon as the child has met all the expectations. Delays may trigger behaviours of concern and may weaken the effectiveness of the strategy.
5. Remove all the tokens and hold on to these until it's time to use the board again.

This is just a guidance of the essential elements of a rewards system. You will need to adapt this to your child based on their language skills, your goals, and your child's preferences.

Considerations:

1. Tokens need to be of value to the child
 - a. Don't forget to 'pair' the tokens with the reward. You need to teach your child that token = reward. This way, your child will learn that earning the tokens is in their best interest and the token themselves will become motivating.
 - b. Choose a token that is appealing to your child based on their preference. If appropriate, ask them what they want their tokens to be (e.g., stickers, coins, checkmarks, etc.)
 - c. If your child is not motivated to earn the tokens, this can indicate that the 'pairing' has not happened, or the reward is not very motivating.
2. Make sure you give your child the reward as soon as they have earned it. If there is too much waiting time, you risk losing the connection between earn all tokens = rewards and may trigger behaviours of concern.
3. Your child's preferences will change! You know it's time to change the reward when your child is no longer motivated to earn it. This usually happens when the child has earned the reward multiple times and it's no longer as exciting as it used to be.
4. The rewards don't always have to be a tangible or food (e.g., toys, candy, preferred activity). If the purpose of your child's behaviours of concern is to 'escape' a situation, they can earn, 'a break'.
5. If using tangible/editable rewards, ensure this is something additional that they will be earning that is not a part of their normal routine. For example, if your child's routine is to go to the park daily, do not set this as the reward.
 - a. This is not something we can 'withhold' from the child if they don't meet the expectation.
 - b. If the child sees the reward system as something that can potentially prevent them from accessing something they would otherwise access, this may negatively impact their motivation to engage with the strategy.
6. **Do not** take away tokens if the child engages in behaviours of concern. Your agreement with your child is that when they meet the expectation, they will earn a token. If your child has fulfilled their part and has earned the token, we need to honour this and not take it away. Instead, we can (a) ensure expectations are incompatible with the behaviours of concern and (b) withhold the token until the child meets the expectation. For example, 'keeping feet to yourself during mealtime' is incompatible with 'kicking'. (c) You may need a different strategy for if/when behaviours of concern occur.
7. **Avoid** telling your child, 'If you don't do ___ you won't get ___'. This may trigger behaviours of concern. Instead, remind your child of the expectation and support them as needed. 'First you need to ___ then you will get the token', for example.

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Examples of Rewards systems:

Whitney's Reward Chart

I'm working for:



The image shows a blue rounded rectangle titled "Whitney's Reward Chart". Inside, there are four yellow squares in a row. Below the second and third squares, the text "I'm working for:" is written in white. To the right of this text is a small image of an ice cream cone with three scoops of different colors (blue, red, white) on a wafer cone.

First, my to-do list

- 1 Take our trash 
- 2 Feed the dog 
- 3 Put on shoes 

Then,

Go to the beach

The image shows a blue rounded rectangle containing a list of tasks. The first task is "1 Take our trash" with a yellow square to its right. The second task is "2 Feed the dog" with a yellow square to its right. The third task is "3 Put on shoes" with a yellow square to its right. Below the list, the word "Then," is written in yellow, followed by "Go to the beach" which is underlined in white.

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