

# PARENTING NEWSLETTER

## FOCUS: TANGIBLE REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

In this week's newsletter we are going to look at tangible rewards and incentives which are an important type of reinforcer like praise and encouragement that can be used to motivate children to learn a particularly difficult behaviour. We thought it fitting to look at tangible rewards and incentives this week as these can be used to increase the effectiveness of meaningful changes set out in previous newsletters such as setting routines and supporting children's learning. Check out the end of the newsletter too for some activities with an educational twist .



### What are tangible rewards?

- > A tangible reward is something concrete; a special treat, additional privileges, stickers, a celebration, or time spent with someone special.
- > These rewards should be used less frequently than social rewards and they are generally reserved for encouraging children to accomplish a difficult task such as toilet training, playing well with others, doing homework without complaining, or getting dressed on their own.
- > When tangible rewards are used to motivate children to do something new, for maximum effect- they should be used in conjunction with social rewards like verbal encouragement and praise (examples of which can be found in previous issues).

### Two ways to use them:

1. A surprise or spontaneous reward whenever you notice your child behaving in some desired way for example you might say, 'Well done Louie for being so good and doing your schoolwork, you can have a special treat'. This is especially valuable for pre-school age children as chart systems may be too complicated and an extra bedtime story or grab bag size prize is rewarding enough.
2. The second approach is to plan in *advance* with your child which behaviours will result in a reward. This type of approach is like a contract and is recommended when you expect to increase the frequency of a certain behaviour, often habitual things like brushing teeth for example, making this a useful tool to help set routines. These tend to be things like lists/charts/menus of rewards that are agreed upon with the child and written down and displayed-think classic sticker chart. This is often more effective with 6-8 year olds and older children.

### Examples of Tangible Rewards

<u>Inexpensive Items</u>	<u>Privileges @ Home</u>	<u>Special Outside Activities</u>	<u>Special Time with Parents</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Grab bag objects (little car, marbles, rubbers, jellybeans, balloons)</li> <li>&gt; Choose an age appropriate treat-small chocolate bar or sweets.</li> <li>&gt; New parts added to toy or collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Choosing pudding for family.</li> <li>&gt; Choice of TV program.</li> <li>&gt; Playing computer game</li> <li>&gt; Using the telephone to call a friend</li> <li>&gt; Making play dough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Going to watch a film</li> <li>&gt; Riding a bike to playground</li> <li>&gt; Staying overnight at grandparents</li> <li>&gt; Go swimming</li> <li>&gt; Go for a picnic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; 10 mins extra playtime</li> <li>&gt; Extra bedtime</li> <li>&gt; Doing a puzzle or playing a game with parent</li> <li>&gt; Plan a day's activities</li> <li>&gt; Making cookies/cake with a parent</li> </ul>

## Establishing Objectives

### > Be specific about appropriate behaviours

Try not to be vague about which behaviours will deserve a reward. It is important that your child knows what these are also. This will avoid confusion when your child thinks they've been good and really you may feel their behaviour has been bad.

### > Make the steps small and work up to bigger goals

One reason rewarding or reward programs fail is that parents make the steps or behavioural expectations too big so that the children feel it is impossible to attain and get bored and give up trying. Look at what you don't like about behaviour and think about small steps to achieve it for example a child being impatient whilst you are shopping, an unrealistic expectation here is for them to be patient for a 45 minute shop. Instead reward their patience after completing an aisle or two for young ones or 10/15 mins of shopping for older and tell them that they'll get a sticker or whatever you decide for this.

### > Pace the steps correctly

The opposite problem occurs when steps are made too easily, and children aren't motivated to work for their reward. This isn't usually a problem at the start of the program but can happen when the program has been established for a while. For example after a few weeks the 3 year old whilst shopping is consistently getting a sticker at the end of each aisle. Unless the parent makes it more challenging like at the end of 3 aisles before receiving sticker, the stickers will lose their reinforcing value.

### > Choose the number of behaviours correctly

Programs fail because we try and tackle too many challenging and negative behaviours at once. Young children require easily understood programs. Remember also that deciding on whether they can have their reward requires your monitoring-the more you choose the more unlikely you can track their progress.

### > Focus on positive behaviours

Don't just focus on negative behaviours and include something within the program that your child is already quite good at doing, This will positively reinforce how they view the program and allow them to trust it works.

### > Involve Children in the program

Occasionally parents choose rewards that are more reinforcing for themselves than their children like getting a pizza or to a concert. Unless children are involved and choose some of their rewards the program won't work. Try to get your children to come up with their own suggestions.

### > Appropriate behaviour- then the reward

Rewards should be given only after the good behaviour occurs. Don't use them in the first instance to bribe.

### > Be positive

You may be tempted (if your child doesn't get any stickers or points) to lecture them to try harder but this is discouraging. Instead use positive encouraging statements 'I'm sure you'll get some soon or next time' which helps convey a positive expectation instead.

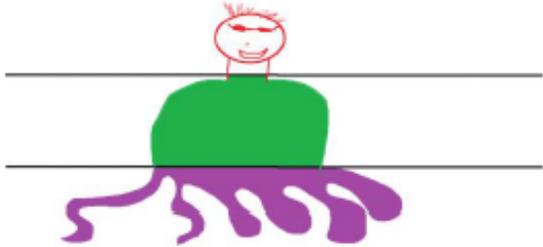
### > Keep rewards and discipline separate

Some parents create tangible rewards programs and then mix it with punishment. For example you may give stickers for sharing and take them away for fighting. The stickers then take on negative associations rather than positive. If you want to withdraw privileges to discipline, keep privileges you foresee withdrawing out of the program (TV time, use of bicycle).

# ACTIVITIES WITH EDUCATIONAL TWIST

<b>Name of Activity</b>	
Charades	
<b>Family/Team Activity</b>	
<b>Value/ Learning Point for YP.</b>	
Social interaction Problem solving Fun	
<b>How to deliver activity.</b>	
<p>For charades, all you need is a bag full of slips of papers with things written on them. You could use popular films, TV programmes, books. You can 'act out' what genre they come from TV you make a square with your figures in front of you, a book you act out opening a book, for film you act out a camera rolling for instance.</p> <p>You will want the papers to have things written on them that someone can read and then act out without using any words for a crowd of people guessing.</p> <p>If you have a large group, separate into 'teams' and make it a competition. Let one person from one team act, while the other team guesses, and then switch roles.</p>	
<b>Resources needed</b>	Paper and pens

<b>Name of Activity</b>	
DIY Laser Maze	
<b>Family/Team Activity</b>	
<b>Value/ Learning Point for YP.</b>	
Social interaction Problem solving and reasoning skills Fun	
<b>How to deliver activity.</b>	
<p>?? Tape the crepe paper strips from one side of the wall to the other in various ways creating a maze for you to climb through.</p> <p>?? The aim is to make it from one side to the other without hitting or breaking any of the paper!</p>	
<b>Resources needed</b>	Crepe paper or strips of paper Masking tape or Sellotape

<b>Name of Activity</b>	
Make a Monster	
Family/Team Activity	
Value/ Learning Point for YP.	
Teamwork and social communication skills	
How to deliver activity.	
<p>This is a paper game that requires a piece of paper, a pen, 2-4 players and lots of imagination. It is primarily a drawing game, but players do not need to be good at drawing to make the game fun.</p> <p>The game starts with the first player holding an empty sheet of paper and their pen. The first player must secretly draw a head at the top of the paper. Once the first player has drawn a head, they must add two neck lines and then fold the paper so that the next player can see the two neck lines, but the picture of the head has been folded over and cannot be seen by anybody else.</p> <p>Assign a body part to each player and repeat this process for the body, legs, and feet of the creature. Afterward, reveal the image and behold the abomination you have all unwittingly created!</p>	
	
<b>Resources needed</b>	Pens Paper

<b>Name of Activity</b>	
Wax or candle painting	
Family/Team Activity or one to one	
Value/ Learning Point for YP.	
Social interaction Creative Fun	
How to deliver activity.	
<p>Using either coloured or white paper 'draw' an image with a candle. You need to apply some pressure.</p> <p>Then wash over the paper with water-based paints.</p> <p>The candle drawing will emerge.</p> <p>Write secret messages - or just get creative.</p>	
<b>Resources needed</b>	Candles Water based paint palettes Brushes Water Absorbent paper

<b>Name of Activity</b>	
Anteater Relay	
Family/Team Activity	
Value/ Learning Point for YP.	
Teamwork and social communication skills	
How to deliver activity.	
This is a fun relay race game. You will need empty bowls on one side of the room and bowls with an equal number of peas (or Maltesers) on the other – enough bowls for the number of teams you have (dependent on the size of your group). Each player needs a straw. The goal of this game is to transport the peas from the full bowl to the empty bowl using the straw. If a pea is dropped, it must be picked it up with the straw by the person who dropped it and transported to the bowl. The winning team is the one which transports all their peas first.	
Resources needed	Bowls or plastic cups Straws Peas (frozen or fresh) or Maltesers
<b>Name of Activity</b>	
Puzzle Piece Hunt	
Family/Team Activity or one to one	
Value/ Learning Point for YP.	
Teamwork and social communication skills	
How to deliver activity.	
Choose a specific area of an inside room and hide the puzzle pieces. Have a clear tabletop available for assembling the puzzle YP are to search for puzzle pieces and bring them to the table and attempt to reassemble the puzzle. If you wish to play this game with teams, have players put team initials or names on the back of the puzzle pieces. The team with the most pieces wins.	
Resources needed	You will need a jigsaw puzzle that's age appropriate or cut a large picture into several pieces.