

NEWSLETTER

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LET'S EXPLORE THE "OTHER HALF" OF DISCIPLINE

The last newsletter focused on punishment; this month, we're exploring the other half of discipline—rewards. Effective at every age, from infancy through adulthood, rewards encourage positive behavior, build self-esteem, strengthen social skills, and support emotional intelligence. When incorporated into your parenting, they can reinforce desired behaviors and, when paired with appropriate punishment portion of consequences, change unwanted behaviors. Here's a challenge for you...

I call this the **80/20 rule**: each day, challenge yourself to notice what your children do right 80% of the time and what they do wrong only 20% of the time. Because people tend to repeat behaviors that receive attention and reinforcement, focusing more on positive actions encourages those behaviors to continue. Consistently using rewards at home not only strengthens desired behavior but also models positive interactions for your children. Three effective rewards are free and easy to use: **praise**, **nurturing touch**, and **privileges**.



The first type of reward is praise—a verbal expression of what someone has done well or of your positive feelings toward them. Whether given directly or indirectly, praise is most effective when it is specific. For example, say, "You did a great job picking up your toys," rather than simply, "Good job cleaning up." Bragging within your child's hearing is another powerful form of praise. If your child overhears you telling a friend how well they made their bed, they are more likely to repeat that behavior. Think about how you feel when you hear someone speaking positively about you. Praise becomes useful once a child understands language, while the next reward can begin at birth.

Nurturing touch is exactly what it sounds like. From birth, infants respond positively to a gentle massage, being bounced on your hip, or cuddling in your arms. As children grow, a pat on the back, hug, or kiss can reinforce positive behavior; for older children, an approving nod or wink may be enough. You know your child best, so **choose an affectionate gesture they welcome**. The final basic reward—privileges—often becomes more effective as children get older.

Privileges are rewards that should be delivered with an attempt to not spend money. For example, extra gaming time, a sleepover, one less chore this week – the possibilities are endless; be creative and have fun. A word of caution though, don't fall into the trap of offering this reward as a bribe to behave the way you wish.

Bottom line – rewards are powerful when coupled with punishment but are equally powerful to use with already established desired behaviors.

IF the behavior was *wrong* = **PUNISHMENT**

IF the behavior was *right* = **REWARD**

Never, ever, ever use a **reward** as a bribe to "please stop."