

Tips for the use of Rewards

- Ensure targets are achievable. It may help to target a small number of behaviours – 2-3. The focus of the reward may change as a young person becomes able to achieve the targets. Having an easily achievable target coupled with slightly harder targets can ensure a young person has some success to aid motivation.
- Rewards work best when they are things that definitely motivate the young person to achieve.
- It is more effective to give a small consequence by removing a privilege for a short amount of time consistently rather than a large consequence inconsistently.
- Make sure you aren't punishing yourself or the entire family by removing a privilege. You want to be able to follow through.
- The privilege must be something you can actually control and not something that will lead to a power struggle.
- If young people are having a particularly hard time turning their behaviour around, parents can allow them to earn back part of their privilege. For example, if a young person has to go to bed 30 minutes early. The parent might say, "When I see you tidying your room, you can earn back 15 minutes from your bedtime." This might help to calm the young person and regain their cooperation and end the escalation before it becomes much bigger.
- *Doing more of something* - encouragement and incentives are a really good way to get a young person to do more of a particular thing. If you want your child to say "please" and "thank you," praise them every time you hear it, as opposed to punishing them when you don't.
- *Doing less of something* - discipline and limit setting are a really good way to get a young person to stop or do less of a particular thing.
- *Doing something new* - use encouragement to teach new behaviours. If you would like a young person to start cleaning their room, set up an encouragement system to help them, rather than remove privileges when their room is messy.
- *Better learning* – young people learn best when they get more encouragement than correction.
- *Less learning* - limit setting is less effective when used in the absence of encouragement. If the only attention a young person receives is negative attention, they will continue to act out to guarantee the attention they crave.
- *Balance* -research shows that parents should strive for a ratio of 4 or 5 encouraging actions to every corrective action. Insecure children can struggle with praise, and so these may need to be given in a lower key way, monitoring whether the child is being dysregulated by the praise. The ratio should however stay the same.
- *Developing skills* – if a young person seems to be, for instance, rude to people, it can help to turn this into a skill that needs to be learnt – for instance 'being respectful' and then to notice any small moment when the skill is shown and praise and encourage it to help the skill 'grow'.

Getting out of a Power Struggle...

- Acknowledging feelings – “I can see you are frustrated by this...” and then saying something neutral - “hmmm, I’ll have a think about that...”. By saying something completely neutral you let a young person know you have heard him/her but that you aren’t going to respond by escalating the argument.
- Remove yourself from the immediate situation, if you need to in order to remain calm. However it is important to ‘signpost’ what you are doing – for example...”I’m just going into the living room to think about what you said...”. Without this the child will feel you have abandoned him and his behaviour is likely to escalate.
- Distract yourself to take your mind off the situation and give yourself time to calm down.
- Resist the temptation to lecture in heated moments. Young people are less likely to learn when they are in high emotional states.
- Don’t argue with the young person. If you are arguing about not doing as they are told, it is about arguing – it is no longer about not doing what is asked – maintaining a non critical dialogue is more helpful.

These ideas are best when used within the parenting approach/ attitude known as **PACE** – ensuring that the relationship between yourself and the child is characterised by **P**layfulness to reduce tension and maintain a sense of novelty and creativity, **A**cceptance of him as a person, and how he may feel or where he ‘is at’, **C**uriosity about his and your own experiences and **E**mpathy with how it may feel to experience life as he does. This ensures that any discipline used via a rewards system is experienced within a nurturing, warm relationship, one that acknowledges one’s own and each others feelings, and seeks to provide comfort, consistency and predictability as the foundation of security in relationships.