

Reinforcing Positive Behavior

Four Types of Reinforcers:

- 1) Material Reinforcers: tangible items such as toys, clothes, and candy....
- 2) Privileges or activity Reinforcers: time together with the parent, slumber party, staying up late, chore done by the parent....
- 3) Social Reinforcers: your approval! A smile, a wink, a hug, praise....
- 4) Token Reinforcers: items given to your child that can be exchanged for more valuable Reinforcers.

Changes in Behavior Occur When...

- 1) The reinforcers increase the strength of the positive behavior. If they do not, you may need to choose different reinforcers.
- 2) The reinforcer should occur immediately after the positive behavior.
- 3) Your child must perform the desired behavior before receiving any reinforcers.
- 4) For new behaviors to occur, the reinforcer needs to follow the behavior every time.

Helpful Hints to Make the Point Chart Work:

- 1) Remember to praise and give points immediately after the desired behavior.
- 2) Review the chart with your child at the end of every day. This gives you a chance to praise the number of points accumulated that day and review all the positive things your child has done to earn the points. Also, when few points have been earned, it gives you a chance to handle it neutrally and encourage your child to earn more the next day.
- 3) Have some of the rewards available every day.
- 4) Give rewards as agreed. Once your child has earned enough points to buy a reward, he should be allowed to receive it regardless of anything else that may have happened that day.
- 5) Encourage your child to buy rewards each time. Remember, it is an opportunity to reinforce the behavior you are working on.
- 6) Bring the point chart to therapy or caseworker sessions each time, whether or not it is completed. That way they can help track and reinforce your child's progress.

How to Make Your Praise Most Effective:

- 1) Deliver praise when you are near your child. When you are close to your child, you can be sure that the behavior you are praising is taking place. Also when you are close, your child is more likely to pay attention to what you are saying.
- 2) Use a sincere, enthusiastic tone of voice. You don't need to be loud, but make sure that you sound thrilled about what your child is doing.
- 3) Use nonverbal reinforcers. Show your child you are pleased by smiling, winking, or touching. Hug your child, high five him, or pat him on the back.
- 4) Be specific. When praising your child, say exactly what behavior you approve of. "Wow, thank you so much for picking up your shoes and putting them in the closet." You want to be specific.

Kazdin, A.E. (2005). *Parent Management Training: Treatment for oppositional, aggressive, and antisocial behavior in children and adolescents*. New York: Oxford University Press (274-277)