**ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR:**

**THE STRUCTURED REWARD SYSTEM**

When trying to manage a child with behavioral problems, it is common to find that praise is not enough to motivate the child to do chores, follow rules, or obey commands. As a result, it is necessary to set up a more powerful program to motivate your child. One such program that has been successful with children is the Home Poker Chip Program (for younger children) or the Home Point System (for older children). Here are the steps to follow:

* 1. **Choose a currency**: Choose something that is easy for you to manage and that you can control, like inexpensive poker chips that have different colors for each child. If you use something like pennies your kids might find them rather than earn them. It is also helpful to choose something that your child will prefer. Older kids often prefer a point system. Get a notebook and set it up like a checkbook with five columns, one each for the date, the item, deposits, withdrawals, and the running balance.
  2. **Explain the plan and involve your child:** We want this system to be as positive as possible. Tell your child that you want to show them how much you appreciate them listening to you by having him earn rewards. Encourage your child to be excited about the program by creating a bank out of an old box or by decorating a poster board with the rules.
  3. **Make a list of good behaviors**: Go back to page and look at the specific behaviors you were hoping to increase. Make sure you focus on the behaviors that are most important to you (e.g., doing what is asked the first time). You can also include specific tasks or chores that cause frequent problems (e.g., getting ready in the morning, feeding the dog). You can also give your child a bonus chip for good behavior whenever you want.
  4. **Make a list of privileges and rewards**: Including rewards that your child doesn’t get to do often (outings, sleep overs) can make the program fun. Including everyday activities (electronics, playing outside) will keep your child motivated over the longer term.
  5. **Do a little math**: Decide how many chips (or points, etc.) each good behavior is worth. Estimate how many chips your child will earn on a typical day (let’s say 10). Then price the everyday privileges so that your child spends most of his chips (about 2/3rds) everyday (that would be 6 or 7). Price the bigger rewards so that your child can do one or two each week.
  6. **Get started**: The first goal is for your child to be successful, so give your child lots of chips at first. After the plan is up and running, require better behavior to earn chips. **Do not give the chips or points away before** the child has done what s/he was told to do, only afterward. When you give points or chips for good behavior, **smile** and tell the child what you like that s/he has done. **Do not take chips away:** Your child may lose interest in earning chips if he thinks he might lose them.
  7. **Update as needed**: Tell your child from the beginning that the behaviors, rewards, and chip values will change over time.

**Structured Reward System Work Sheet**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Currency: Poker chips/token Points Stickers Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* | | |
| *Positive Behaviors to Increase* | Value |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
|  |  |
|  | | |
| Daily Privileges | Value |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |
| Rewards | Value |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |
| 6. |  |
| 7. |  |
| 8. |  |
| 9. |  |
| 10. |  |