



FOR REWARDS

It is always nice to be rewarded for a job well done or to reinforce good behavior. Children love rewards and rewards for good behavior or a job well done can make a difference. Rewards have a place, but we are now realizing that kids' health has paid a price for using food as a reward. Food has been given as a reward for a very long time. Unfortunately this has led to problems with people using food as a way to make themselves feel better. We want to do what is best for our children and our children are now being diagnosed with adult health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure and high blood fats. As a parent/caregiver you are the primary educator for your child. We know you can't do it alone. There is lots of support to help you and the school teach children healthy habits by using non-food rewards to reinforce and reward good behaviors.



Advantages of Rewards

Inexpensive

Immediate behavior change

Disadvantages of Food as a Reward

Contributes to Poor Health

High calorie, sugar, fat and salt foods are typical reward foods and can lead to health issues if consumed in excess.

Contributes to Poor Dental Health

Eating sweets promotes tooth decay.

Contributes to Poor Eating Habits

Teaches children to eat when they are not hungry, as a reward to themselves. This habit may last a lifetime and can contribute to unhealthy weight gain.

Increases Preferences for Sweets

Food preferences increase significantly when the food is used as a reward.

Sends Mixed Messages About Nutrition Education

Nutrition education teaches children that it is important to be healthy to do their best. When students are rewarded with food they learn if they do their best they should get a sweet or special food treat. These "treat" foods are then seen as "good" foods.



FOR ALTERNATIVE REWARDS

YOUNGER STUDENTS

Let your child come up with list of ideas

Read their favorite book to them

Trip to the library

Listen to your child read

Trip to the park

Play dress up

One-on-one time

Play catch, frisbee, etc.

High five

Thumbs up

Tell them "great job"

Hug

Stay up late

Coupon to get out of a chore

Family game

Talk about child's accomplishment at dinner

Special plate or placemat at a meal

Art project

Teach them a new chore and let them do it by themselves

"Date" with mom or dad

Coloring book

Add to your child's collection (**ROCK, STAMP, ETC.**)

OLDER STUDENTS

Let your child come up with a list of ideas

Hug or other gentle touch

Praise ("I'M IMPRESSED, YOU ROCK!")

Help your child on a task or project

Schedule special one-on-one time together

Write them a note of congratulations

Stay up late night

Sleep in morning

Get out of a chore

Pick next family meal

Have them choose next family activity

Use of the car

Time out with a friend

Books

Music

Contribute to collection (**SPORTS CARDS, ETC.**)

Contribute to college savings fund

Match dollars for future purchase

REFERENCES USED

Alternatives to Using Food as a Reward – Michigan Team Nutrition (9/04); Constructive Classroom Rewards – www.cspinet.org; Non-Food Ways to Raise Funds and Reward a Job Well Done – Square Meals, Texas Department of Agriculture (2004); www.wsmartfoods.com

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