

Healthy Reward Practices in the Home Environment



The use of praise and rewards can be a good way to manage children's behaviour. Rewarding children can increase in their own motivation for positive behaviours.¹ When children are behaving well regularly, external rewards may no longer be needed.

Food is sometimes used as a way to reward children in both home and school settings, reinforce positive behaviour and achievements. It has been found that rewarding children with unhealthy foods may be unhealthy as they can begin to like these foods even more.² Therefore, giving children foods as treats may encourage them to eat more unhealthy foods.

Studies suggest that rewarding children with food does not help them build a healthy relationship with food. Using food as a reward may contribute to fussy eating and make children less willing to try new foods.³

Food as a reward has also been linked to emotional overeating in children.^{3,4} Children may learn to eat food as a reward or comfort even when they are not hungry, as it can become linked with mood and emotion instead of eating for their body's nutrition.⁵

This resource provides some possible alternatives to using food as a reward that can be used to promote good behaviour. Some healthy food rewards are also provided as alternatives to common treats.

According to results from a recent survey answered by Nazareth Catholic Community parents, food is sometimes used as a way to reward children by almost half of the parents who responded. To provide ideas for alternative rewards, student suggestions have been taken into account in the development of this resource.

References

1. Bear, G., Slaughter, J., Mantz, L., & Farley-Ripple, E. (2017). Rewards, praise, and punitive consequences: Relations with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Teaching And Teacher Education, 65*, 10-20.
2. Newman, J., & Taylor, A. (1992). Effect of a means-end contingency on young children's food preferences. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 53*(2), 200-216.
3. Roberts, L., Marx, J., & Musher-Eizenman, D. (2018). Using food as a reward: An examination of parental reward practices. *Appetite, 120*, 318-326.
4. Blissett, J., Haycraft, E., & Farrow, C. (2010). Inducing preschool children's emotional eating: relations with parental feeding practices. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 92*(2), 359-365.
5. Johnson, A. (2013). Eating beyond metabolic need: how environmental cues influence feeding behavior. *Trends in Neurosciences, 36*(2), 101-109.

Reward Suggestions

Here is a list of healthy rewards for children grouped by theme.^{1,2} They can be used alone or in combination, depending on the situation.

<p><u>Social Rewards</u> Often have a higher value to children than toys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Thanking verbally -Spending some quality time with your children -Verbal praise and feedback -Simple gestures, e.g. pat on your child's shoulder 	<p><u>Privileges for children</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planning a day's activities -Taking time off from chores -Choosing a TV program -Picking a radio station in car -Decorating their own room -Putting up schoolwork -Having a friend stay over
<p><u>Toys</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stickers -Yo-yos -Toy cars, trucks or helicopters -Playing cards -Stretchy animals -Small dolls or action figures 	<p><u>Sports Equipment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Paddleballs -Soccer ball or basketball -Frisbees -Hula hoop -Skipping rope -Head and wrist sweatbands -Water bottles
<p><u>Indoor activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Doing a jigsaw puzzle -Doing a craft -Playing a board game -Playing a video game -Helping to make healthy snacks -Netflix (or going to the movies) -Taking a karate or art class 	<p><u>Outdoor activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Playing at the playground -Going to a sports game -Cycling, skating or swimming -Going for a picnic or hike -Camping in the backyard/park -Planting a garden

This resource has been developed as part of implementing Nazareth's Healthy Food Supply and Nutrition Procedure.

The HFSNP discourages discretionary foods being used as rewards or encouragements in the school environment.

***It is important to think through your plan and capacity (time and money) for rewarding your children's good behaviour. Try not to promise more than you can offer.*²**

Healthy food rewards

Finger foods as alternatives to common treats:³

- Rice crackers
- Mini toasts
- Unsalted popcorn
- Wholegrain crackers with cheese
- Pretzels
- Bread sticks
- Dried fruit
- Frozen berries⁴



Here are **25** simple and healthy homemade snack ideas by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. For detailed information, please visit:

<http://www.eatright.org/~media/eatright%20files/nationalnutritionmonth/handoutsandtipsheets/nutritiontipsheets/25healthysna>

1. Greater Victoria School District. (2009). Alternatives to Using Food as Reward. Safe and Caring Schools Program.

<<http://web1.nbed.nb.ca/sites/ASD-W/HealthyLearners/Documents/Healthy%20Eating/Alternatives%20To%20Using%20Food%20As%20A%20Reward.pdf>>

2. Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance. (2014). Home Rewards For School-aged Children.

<<https://www.pa-fsa.org/Portals/0/Docs/Parent-Resources/School-Age/Home%20Rewards%20for%20School%20Aged%20Kids.pdf>>

3. Northern Territory Government. (2017). School Nutrition and Healthy Eating Policy. <https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/257819/tips-for-parents.pdf>

4. National Health and Medical Research Council. 2015. Healthy meal and snack ideas. (2015). <<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eating-well/tips-eating-well/healthy-meal-and-snack-ideas>>