

The practice of using rewards may be used for children with or without mental illness. When a child has good behavior giving them a reward for it makes them want to behave well in the future. You can use one of three different kinds of rewards: physical, unlabeled verbal and labeled verbal. The examples below demonstrate each of these types of rewards.

How does this practice work?

- Decide on what behavior/s will be rewarded.
- Decide on what kind of rewards would work for a child (parent and child do this together).
- Make rewards easily available to a child (playing a game).
- Make rewards small for easy behaviors and large for difficult behaviors.
- Give the rewards right after the good behavior.
- Give rewards **ONLY** after the targeted behavior has occurred.
- Provide a reward after each and every instance of the targeted behavior.

Example:

Physical reward Katie runs around the house yelling at everyone when she is unhappy. She will run right into someone and start hitting them. Her parents have been working with her to stop this behavior. One night just before dinner time, Katie's brother teases her about her hair. This time she does not start yelling and running. She tells her brother to stop teasing her. Mom and dad both give her a big smile and a pat on the back.

Unlabeled reward Doris hits her little sister Amy when she doesn't get her way. Doris's parents have been working with her to stop hitting her sister. One day Doris was just about to hit Amy and she stopped herself. Her mom and dad saw her do this. Mom says, "Terrific" and dad says "I like that."

Labeled reward Jamie comes home from school and dumps her backpack and shoes on the floor in the kitchen. She also is so moody she snaps on everyone. Jamie's parents have been working with her to stop snapping and pick up her belongings. One day Jamie came home from school, dropped her backpack on the kitchen floor, but remembered she wasn't supposed to and picked it up and brought the pack to her bedroom. She asked for time alone because she was feeling crabby. Her mom said, "Jamie, I like it when you ask for what you need and way to go for picking up your backpack."

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