

# What You Always Wanted to Know About Praise and Rewards

## 1. *Shouldn't children at this age already know what is expected of them and how to behave?*

Behavior that is acknowledged is more likely to occur again. Behavior that is ignored is less likely to be repeated. No good behavior should be taken for granted or it may decline, regardless of the student's age.

## 2. *Praising feels unnatural. Won't kids think that it is phony?*

If you are not used to praising, it will feel unnatural at first. But the more you praise, the more natural it will feel. If you praise good behavior that truly has happened, there is nothing phony about it. Students who get praise will tend to praise others too. So praise won't seem phony to them.

## 3. *Isn't praise manipulative and coercive?*

The purpose of praise is to reinforce and increase positive behavior with the student's knowledge. Praise helps clearly describe expectations so that students can successfully meet them. Helping children succeed is a positive thing to do!

## 4. *Isn't giving a reward like bribing students to do what you want them to do?*

A bribe attempts to influence or persuade someone to produce a desired behavior that hasn't yet happened, whereas a reward reinforces a desired behavior that has already happened. A reward is given after the behavior occurs.

## 5. *Won't students come to depend on tangible rewards? Don't extrinsic rewards decrease intrinsic motivation?*

Tangible rewards should be accompanied by social rewards. When a message that recognizes a student's efforts as being responsible for success is given with a reward, internal motivation will actually be strengthened.

## 6. *Shouldn't rewards be saved for special achievements?*

This gives students the message that everyday behaviors and efforts don't count. Small steps on the way to achievement (such as homework completion) also need to be recognized and rewarded.

## 7. *Where will I get enough money to supply all these rewards?*

Tangible rewards need not be too expensive. As students learn the desired behavior, the tangible rewards can gradually be faded out. Rewards can be privileges too, such as being able to go to lunch first or getting extra computer time.

## 8. *Do students in middle school and high school still need rewards?*

People of all ages, including adults, need to be recognized and rewarded for their efforts. Students of all ages do need recognition, praise, and rewards, particularly during the difficult transition to adolescence.

# The Magic Ratio of Positive and Negative Moments

According to the Nobel Prize-winning scientist Daniel Kahneman, each day we experience approximately 20,000 moments. A moment is defined as a few seconds in which our brain records an experience. The quality of our days is determined by how our brains recognize and categorize our moments—either as positive, negative, or just neutral. Rarely do we remember neutral moments.

There is no question that the memories of our lives are recorded in terms of positive and negative experiences. Now scientists propose that each day our brains—i.e., our thoughts and emotions—keep track of our positive and negative moments, and the resulting score contributes to our overall mood.

Our emotional tone or mood is defined by the number of positive versus negative moments experienced during the course of a day. This is not really news to those people who study emotional intelligence and how the brain works. Yet it has major implications for how we can improve the quality of our lives.

## The Magic Ratio

Over the past decade, scientists have explored the impact of positive-to-negative interaction ratios in our work and personal life. They have found that this ratio can be used to predict—with remarkable accuracy—everything from workplace performance to divorce.

This work began with noted psychologist John Gottman's exploration of positive-to-negative ratios in marriages. Using a 5:1 ratio, which Gottman dubbed 'the magic ratio,' he and his colleagues predicted whether 3,000 newlywed couples would stay together or divorce by scoring their positive and negative interactions in one 15-minute conversation between each husband and wife. Ten years later, the follow-up revealed that they had predicted divorce with 94 percent accuracy.

By Seeking the Peak, we will create a positive, safe, consistent school environment for students, staff, and visitors. To achieve this, we ask that staff members increase awareness of negative interactions and work to increase positive interactions.

5:1

FIVE POSITIVE INTERACTIONS

TO EVERY

ONE NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL INTERACTION