

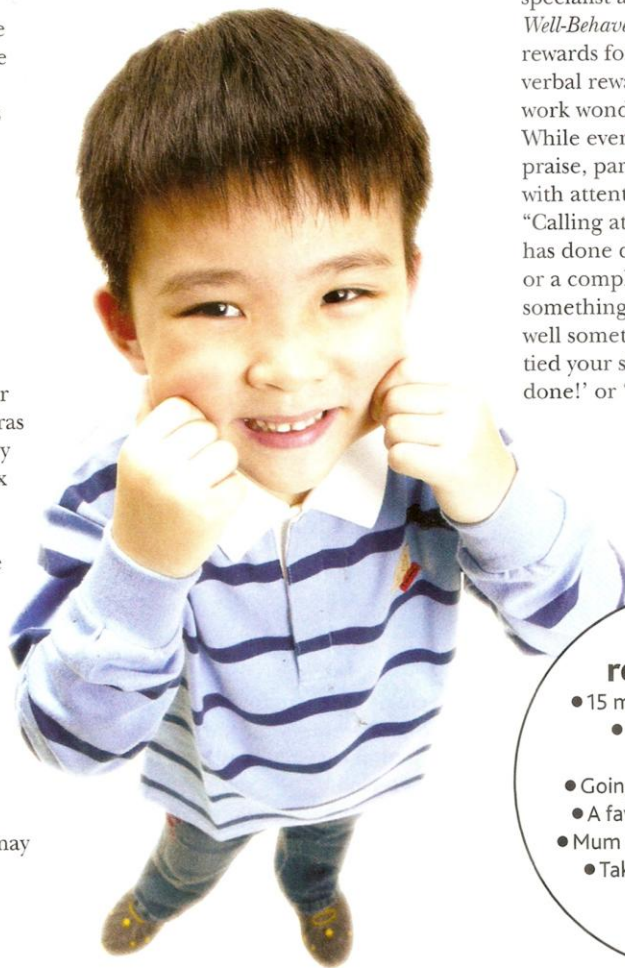
The carrot & stick method

BY ARUNDHATI NATH

THE other day, we were at a children's park with my four year old niece and her friend. After playing for an hour, both refused to go home and insisted that they would like to play some more. We were at our wits end trying to convince them to go home. My niece threw a tantrum, fuming with anger, and tears flowing down her cheeks.

Do you sometimes face a situation wherein you feel you need to punish your child? Alternatively, does your child occasionally behave excellently, and you miss applauding him? Most children upset their parents with undesired behaviour, and sometimes, surprise them with good behaviour. Dr Seema Rekha, behaviour expert at Paras Hospitals, Gurgaon, says, "The journey of an infant to being a toddler is a mix of joy and frustrations of exploration, experimentation, emotional struggle and anxiety; self created performance pressure and much more." Moreover, bad displaying behaviour is not necessarily equivalent to being a bad child.

Behaviour patterns, temperament and actions of parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, teachers or even a child's nanny are instrumental in structuring his demeanour. "A child may not be able to comprehend negative feedback. So, teaching 'what to do' is more important than teaching 'what NOT to do,'" Dr Seema adds.



REWARDS WHAT WORKS

Appreciation: James Windell, parenting specialist and author of *8 Weeks to a Well-Behaved Child*, feels that the best rewards for toddlers are the social and verbal rewards. Praise and attention work wonderfully for young children. While everyone may be familiar with praise, parents may be less familiar with attention. According to Windell, "Calling attention to something a child has done doesn't really involve praise or a compliment it just calls attention to something done; and that works just as well sometimes." You could say, 'You've tied your shoe laces on your own! Well done!' or 'You've cleared your toys in

Small reward idea

- 15 minutes extra playtime
- Overnight stay at granny's place
- Going to the zoo on Sunday
- A favourite meal or movie
- Mum sharing a bedtime story
- Take her opinion for the lunch menu

time, good work!' However, do not exaggerate in praise.

Reward charts: Roopa Banerjee, mum to six year old Rohan uses an innovative reward chart system for applauding good behaviour in her child. "Each time Rohan behaves kindly or is sensitive to someone's needs, or does his homework without being asked to, he gets a silver sticker which we put up on the chart. Every five stickers get him a gold star sticker! I tweak the rules now and then where the gold star also means a treat like going for a movie or buying something that he has been waiting for," Roopa explains. She thinks children feel motivated this way and lauding their efforts is better than punishing them for their mistakes.

Fun activity or extra time: When you feel that your child has behaved very well or has done her bit of work in time, you could play a game together or give her some extra story reading or TV viewing time. Though the rewards would vary depending on the situation, it is essential to make her feel appreciated for her efforts.

REWARDS WHAT DOES NOT WORK?

Do not try to bribe your child with chocolates or toys. 'Do your homework and I will give you a box of chocolates' sends so many wrong signals. There is a very thin line between motivating and bribing. The child will make a habit of asking for a bribe for every little thing they do if they're bribed this way. You do need to be very careful about that. Do not over praise or exaggerate. This will make him over confident.

Dos and don'ts

1. Appreciate her efforts by clapping or hugging her.
2. Say 'well done!' For good work
3. Give small rewards like stickers or extra playtime
4. Do not shout at her
5. Do not hit her
6. Explain everything calmly

Punishment ideas

- No cartoon network for a day
- No playing with her favourite Barbie
- Less playtime with friends
- No special outings for a week

PUNISHMENTS WHAT WOULD WORK?

Withdraw a benefit: When there is a problem behaviour, you can remove an activity or privilege. Shuchi Kalra, mum to three year old Ayzel, says, "If my kid acts up, I usually 'take away' something she cherishes like not letting her watch TV for a day or cutting down her gadget time." It is just the opposite of offering a fun activity or extra time.

Ignore bad behaviour: Dr Seema feels ignoring bad behaviour works very well because at times toddlers do something undesired just to get attention

The reward chart can also be used here by removing a star if the child misbehaves.

PUNISHMENTS WHAT WOULD NOT WORK?

- ◆ **Don't yell at her.** You'll never win here. "Shouting, screaming, hitting may give you short term success, but finally your child would learn aggression," Dr Seema says.
- ◆ **Do not threaten or scare her.** Children learn from the environment in which they grow. It is important to see that you do not call her a 'bad girl' or stop talking to her.
- ◆ **Don't leave him alone in a room.** It could frighten him. ■

