

Privileges: Turning the "Given" into the "Earned."

"If you go to bed now, I'll let you have a popsicle tomorrow for breakfast."

How often have you tried this one? Okay, maybe that isn't quite how you worded it, but we all know we've used similar tactics to gain compliance from our little bundles of joy. Bribery is an intervention that most parents have resorted to at one time or another, but is it really an effective method? Not usually. It may work in the short term, but how will it feel when your child insists on being rewarded each day for behavior that is expected?

Instead of pacifying your child with toys, treats, or money, consider non-tangible rewards in the form of privileges. Write a list of all of the privileges your child receives each day (even if they are not normally perceived as privileges) then let your child know that these privileges will not be granted without appropriate behavior. The privileges are now the reward for good behavior.

There are a wide variety of privileges that can be removed from your child when he or she misbehaves, for example:

Does your child have a video game system that can be used at will?

Not any more.

Does your child get rides to the mall or to friend's houses whenever he or she wants?

Not any more.

Do you buy clothes and shoes for your child?

Well now it looks like you'll be shopping at Wal Mart instead of at GAP.

Is your child's curfew 9pm?

Well, now she'll be able to catch the evening news at 6pm.

Do you pay for your child's school lunches?

Looks like she'll be "brown-bagging" tuna sandwiches until she shapes up.

Do you see the pattern here? Most children are motivated to maintain their valued privileges and will avoid behaviors that result in their removal. Determine which privileges are most important to your child then use this knowledge to motivate positive behavior from him or her.