



## Positive Reinforcement of Desired Behaviors

We can influence a loved one's motivation to change. One way is by **positively reinforcing** any healthy choice and behavior we see, no matter how small. This serves to activate the brain in a way that can motivate our loved one to do more of the positive thing.

- What is reinforced tends to be repeated
- What is not reinforced tends not to be repeated

## Helpful Hints to Rewarding Positive Behaviors

Rewards are in the eye of the beholder: What may be a reinforcer for one person (tickets to the movies); may not appeal to the other. Spend time thinking, talking to your partner, or talking to your child about what they find rewarding.

Rewards should fit your child's needs in their current life stage; this may change as your child develops. What may be a reinforcer at the age of ten (spending time with mom/dad) may not be at the age of seventeen (time away from mom/dad).

Rewards should follow the behavior they are meant to strengthen. Timing helps link the reward to the behavior, so plan rewards that you can deliver immediately or shortly AFTER (not before) the behavior takes place. Resist the temptation to give something now in the hopes that your child's behavior will change later.

Rewards are things you're willing and able to give. Choose rewards within your budget that expose your loved one to healthy activities and communities. The rewards you choose to give should also feel comfortable to you. If a gift feels like too much, a gesture doesn't feel genuine, or words don't feel honest, keep brainstorming until you identify a reward that is both reinforcing to your child and comfortable to you. Reinforcement is not about pretending that everything is ok; remind yourself of what you are trying to accomplish.