



# Helping Hands Christian Learning Center

"Let Us Make a Difference in Your Child's Life"

## Punished By Rewards

I was speaking with a mom of a four-year-old recently who was telling me about the behavior system she had enacted to get her daughter to stop hitting, yelling and treating her disrespectfully. She was giving her daughter money each time she behaved "correctly". I explained to the mom that while systems like this may seem logical to most grown-ups, they are, in fact, viewed by most contemporary child development experts as ineffective. These methods may seem to curb unwanted, negative behaviors in the short-term but they prove ineffective in the long-term picture of a child's life.

Why? Because they provide only "extrinsic motivation," which means the behaviors appear to stop only as long as the rewards continue. Without getting to the root of the behavior problems, the weed grows back. It may look different next time as the negative behaviors change, but their reasons for existing continue unabated.

The true goal for children is to instill "intrinsic motivation," where the incentive to behave appropriately comes from a desire within, rather than an eagerness for an external reward or a fear of an external punishment.

One way this is achieved is by providing "normal social consequences". In other words, cause and effect or "the punishment fits the crime". Teaching children the expected consequences of a behavior will better prepare them for times when you are not around to dole out rewards or punishments. For example, if a child doesn't put the caps back on the markers, he doesn't get yelled at for being irresponsible. He simply no longer has markers to use for a while, because they dried out. If a child throws a book at a sibling, she may calmly be told that she will be without books for a while.

There is much so more to learn about this important subject. I know I barely scratched the surface. There are also many valuable resources available to spur your thinking. I know my views were forever changed when I read [Punished By Rewards](#), by Alfie Kohn. A new DVD of a recent lecture of his, entitled "Unconditional Parenting" is also quite remarkable.

Until Next Month,  
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Vice President, Education

