

Tips for Providers: Rewarding Children

Your simple words of praise and support can help children make healthy choices. As child care providers, we may sometimes focus on things children do wrong instead of things children do correct. Catch children eating healthy foods or being active and encourage those healthy behaviors by giving frequent praise and meaningful rewards.



1 Say it Like You Mean it!

Be genuine with your praise.

2 Be Specific.

Make sure you tie the healthy behavior to the praise or reward so the children know exactly why they are being rewarded. For example, "I love that you tried your broccoli today."

3 Make Sure the Reward is Special to the Children.

The reward does not have to cost money. The reward could be a hug or a pat on the back. Reward children's healthy behavior with something that is special to them and this reward should encourage them to behave the same way again.

4 Choose an Active Reward.

Reward children with extra play time outside or with a fun activity like tag to increase their physical activity.

5 Reward the Behavior Right Away.

Giving praise or reward as close to the behavior as possible lets children know exactly why they are being rewarded.

6 Avoid Using Food as a Reward.

Some providers use food to bribe or reward children for a certain behavior. Using food as a reward can make that food seem even better to the children since they are having to do something they might not want to do (like try a new food) in order to get the food reward.

7 Stay Positive.

When trying to get children to eat healthy or exercise more, use a positive tone to help increase the children's belief in their ability to make that behavior change.

8 Get Everyone Involved.

The more people involved in providing support and encouragement for the children to make healthy behavior changes, the more likely you will see behavior change in the children.

9 Start a Sticker Chart.

Another fun way to encourage children to be healthy is to track their behavior with a sticker chart. Place a sticker on the chart every time they do a desired behavior like trying a new vegetable.

10 Be Consistent!

The more you can reinforce children's healthy behavior, the more they will continue to make the same healthy choices.



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