

Catch Them Doing It Right! Back-to-school time can be a tough time for children - new teachers, new routines, new ex-

pectations, new friends (or estab-

lishing turf with old friends). This

is an important time for parents to

put more emphasis on the parenting technique of praise and "catching them doing it right."

We all know that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. In a family, it's often the annoying child who gets the attention or the misbeha-

Recipe Topics

If you have recipes for the topics listed below, please share them with us. We welcome your recipes, but ask that you include accurate measurements, a complete list of ingredients and clear instructions with each recipe you submit. Send your recipes to Lou Ann Good, Lancaster Farming, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522. Recipes should reach our office one week before publishing date listed below.

18 - Tomato Recipes

- September
- October
- **Cooking with Apples** 25 -2 -
 - Using Rice National Pork Month 9 -

vior that gets noticed. It takes energy and deliberate effort for parents to act differently. But effective praise can be an incredibly powerful tool to help a youngster develop new, positive behaviors.

A reward system is one way to recognize positive behavior. These systems have their fans and their critics. I would not become overly committed to external reward systems because children may become dependent on the incentive to do the right thing. But, there are times and places when rewards work.

One grandparent shared with me how she used a reward system to honor her grandchildren's good behavior. Before their family vacation, this grandma assigned each of her grandchildren a certain color poker chip. While on the trip, she carried an empty gallon jar with her. Each time she saw one of her grandchildren doing something admirable, she would place a colored poker chip in the jar recognizing the act. She didn't make a big deal of it, but she did make sure that the kids could always see the jar.

When a child had accumulated a predetermined number of chips in the jar, they got a little prize (the kind of things you pick up at the dollar store or individual snack packs). She said it worked fabu-

lously. In fact, by the end of the trip, the kids were practically falling over themselves to be polite or helpful. She said it was one of the first trips that wasn't filled with bickering.

My child's day care has another way of "catching them doing it right." The providers regularly praise the children for following directions, but if a child does something great under his own initiative, they will give them the special treat of getting a stamp on their hand. That's a big deal to a two-year-old. One day my daughter got a dinosaur stamp on her hand when she picked up other kids' toys without being asked. She was so proud when her teacher told me the reason she received a stamp.

Reward systems are not the only way to "catch them doing it right.'

A spoken compliment can be just as meaningful as a treat.

When you see your son do something well, tell him. Be specific. Don't just say, "I was really proud of you tonight." Say, "I not-

iced how you introduced the new guy in your class to all your friends. That's really being caring." Describe exactly what you noticed.

These specific descriptions help a child learn what is valued. "You really worked hard on your homework this evening. You struggled with that one math problem for 20 minutes until you came up with the correct answer."

"I noticed that you ignored your little sister when she was bugging you and calling you baby names. That takes self-control!'

Catching your child doing it right can become a part of a balanced parenting strategy that includes both praise for positive choices and consequences for inappropriate actions.

And while you're at it, don't stop with your kids, catch others "doing it right" too — your spouse, your mother-in-law, your neighbor, your pastor, your secretary. A word of specific praise goes a long way in an environment that is too often critical and blaming.

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