



### **FOUR WAYS TO REWARD YOUR CHILD WITHOUT FOOD**

Adults and children alike are encouraged to eat and drink more than ever before. Just look at super-sized fast-food meals, the sheer number of restaurants, and large single serving soda cups to see how our portion sizes have increased.

One way that parents and educators can fight against the messages to eat more is to stop using food as rewards for good behavior or good grades. While inexpensive reward foods, like candy and ice cream, can improve short-term behavior, they usually have little to no nutritional value. So, while this may seem like a benign practice it can have many negative repercussions for children, including preference and expectations for sweets, encouraging overeating of sugary and fatty foods, and teaching that food, mood, and behavior are connected. Here are a few ways to set positive examples about food while disconnecting it from a reward system:

1. When your student or child deserves praise for good behavior reward them with attention, responsibility, and general praise. These social rewards are often more valuable and memorable than anything else.
2. Invite a student who has shown exemplary behavior to pick a small toy out of a classroom 'treasure chest' that's full of inexpensive toys like stickers, pens, superballs, and notepads.
3. Have a visible chart in your home to display the chores or behavior improvements that children have accomplished. Set a goal and use stickers to mark progress. When a goal is reached, plan an active family trip to a zoo or skating rink!
4. Offer special activities as rewards such as a trip to the park or library, a bike ride, family night with your child choosing the movie, staying up late, etc.