



## BEHAVIOR CONTRACTING

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The form in this flyer can be used for school or home with a child 7 or older. A copy goes in the child's assignment book or notebook and a copy goes on the refrigerator and on the wall above the child's bed or in another place where he or she will see it.

### PRINCIPLES FOR BEHAVIOR CONTRACTING

- ✓ Remember that the agreement *binds the parents* to follow through consistently. Otherwise, the child will come to view any behavioral interventions or incentives as a waste of time and you lose power with the child. The therapist can help you to be consistent. If two adults work with the child - for instance, two parents, parent and step-parent, parent and grand-parent - both must work consistently. Otherwise the message to the child is that learning to do better is not important or the adults do not care enough to make these changes or the wishes of the parent who wants change are not important because the other parent is indicating he or she does not value these changes. Consistency is all.
- ✓ Remember, the agreement means from now on you will handle discipline in a new way. You will refer to the rewards the child may miss out on or will miss out on. *Discipline which is done in anger or without forethought and planning is no longer helpful or okay*. For most families, the way they disciplined the child before isn't working very well, is it? It's time to scrap it. Sure, it may have worked for your other children or it worked when your parents did it for you when you were growing up; but it may not be working for your child. The use of criticism ("You bother me when I am on the phone,"), commands ("Leave your sister alone"), punishments ("For that you've lost your video games for a week"), grounding, and the like just won't work.
- ✓ Behavior Contracting covers the behaviors on the chart. But it is also an idea for other behaviors. For example, let's say the child hits or throws something, but this behavior is not covered by the Contract. Do not immediately issue a grounding or punishment. Tell the child you will talk over how he or she should be disciplined. You'll get back to him

or her *later*. Then use reinforcements when the child performs the opposite skills. You will learn to reinforce keeping his hands to himself, which is of course incompatible with hitting. To continue, when the child resists being angry, or when the child handles anger without hitting or throwing, reinforce that self-control behavior.

**Behaviors which show lasting skills are the most important to reinforce, such as self-control, waiting his turn, persistence and concentrating on finishing hard tasks, thinking through a difficult situation.**

- ✓ Remember to remind the child of the agreement frequently. Before bed remind the child of behaviors for the next day. Another recap in the morning is desirable. Keep it simple enough so that the child can memorize the description of the behavior and repeat it to you every time you ask.
- ✓ Remember to keep the behavioral descriptions very simple. Complicated things slip out of the child's mind *while* he or she is listening to you.
- ✓ Review the behaviors several times to make sure the child can exactly describe the desired behaviors to you.
- ✓ Remember to ask the child to repeat the list of behaviors 1-2 times a day.
- ✓ Remember to reinforce the child EVEN for remembering the behaviors on the list and knowing them. AD/HD children tend to forget what is desired of them and should be reinforced for remembering the skills they are expected to perform. For younger kids, act out the behaviors, for example, stand with hands to your side when saying "Keep your hands to yourself."
- ✓ Remember that the reinforcements are not those *you* would find rewarding. Reinforcement is something that matters enough to a child that he or she will behave in new and different ways in order to have that reinforcement. Children know what will thrill them or mean something to them, so ask. Read our flyer on Understanding Reinforcement.
- ✓ Remember to remind the child of the reinforcements to be earned. Do not expect the child to keep rewards in mind. *Impulsive children cannot be expected to remember rewards*, no matter how big they may be. Their impulses loom larger in their awareness than reinforcements do. If you remember this, you will be more able to understand the importance of these principles.
- ✓ On the form, I AGREE, the period of time could be a Day or a Week. Enter the time period in the chart.
- ✓ The form can be used at home or in school.
- ✓ The form can be re-negotiated as often as it proves necessary.

I AGREE

I am \_\_\_\_\_.

I AGREE I will do all this. I want to do a great job.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Each \_\_\_\_\_ I AGREE I will do these FOR THE WHOLE TIME and I will then earn one of these rewards:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

If I don't do my part and do all these, I will not earn the rewards. Plus I will lose some other privileges or rewards.

I AGREE to do these the best I can.

Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# MY WEEK

I am \_\_\_\_\_.

I AGREED to do all this. Here is what I accomplished:

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

The rewards I achieved this week are: