

Behavior Charts

Alexandra (Sandy) Rogers, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychologist

CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE

18000 Yorba Linda Blvd., Ste. 204

Yorba Linda, CA 92886

Phone Number: (714) 646-8095

<http://www.sandyrogersphd.com>

WHY BEHAVIOR CHARTS?

The modern home is filled with confusion. Often the parents are working and trying to raise the children. The radio and TV are going, the children and pets are clamoring for attention and the parents are simply worn out and tired. If the parents or the children are over stimulated and overwhelmed, the children may have a hard time knowing when the parents “mean business”.

Behavior charts give the parents a way to focus their own attention on which behaviors are important to focus on at this time - this leads to the children knowing what the parents find most important. The children find this a good way to gain the parents' undivided attention.

WHAT BEHAVIORS SHOULD BE LISTED ON BEHAVIOR CHARTS?

Through the years, I've worked with many parents on behavior charts. The main mistake that most make is to put the behaviors which they want stopped on the chart. This focuses the attention on behaviors you want to disappear. This is what your children were doing to get your attention in the first place! Yes, yelling is a form of attention. This is referred to as negative reinforcement.

I recommend, that you tell your children what you want to see, and pay attention when they do those behaviors. Putting the desired behaviors on the chart and giving positive points for those behaviors is a much more powerful way of effecting behavior change. This is referred to as a positive reinforcement.

Confused? Read on - I will give lots of examples below. You will see behaviors listed, plus how to assign the points or happy faces.

MOST COMMON BEHAVIORS LISTED ON BEHAVIOR CHARTS

· Brush teeth, get dressed, comb hair before breakfast - parents complain that their young one plays or sits in a stupor in the morning instead of getting dressed. (10 points for doing it without reminders. 0 points for having to be reminded.)

- Calm voice, calm body – some children have meltdowns and screaming fits which bring the house down. They do this with very little provocation – all you said was no, to some demand. For most, they learned at some point that if they pitch a major fit you will let them have what they wanted just to shut them up. Give points for staying calm all day. (20 points for doing it without reminders. 10 points for having to be reminded. 0 points for ignoring reminder.)
- Avoid arguing – some kids find it necessary to correct their parents and become argumentative instead of doing what is asked of them. In this case, instead of taking points away for arguing, you will be giving points for avoiding arguments. (10 points for doing it without reminders. 5 points for having to be reminded. 0 points for ignoring reminder.)
- Put toys away - give points and praise for picking toys up instead of taking points away for forgetting to do so. (10 points for doing it without reminders. 5 points for having to be reminded. 0 points for ignoring reminder.)
- Share toys – instead of punishing for grabbing toys, give points for sharing and avoiding grabbing. (10 points for doing it without reminders. 5 points for having to be reminded. 0 points for ignoring reminder.)
- Play nicely – give points for getting along and avoiding fights and arguments with peers. (20 points for doing it without reminders. 10 points for having to be reminded. 0 points for ignoring reminder.)
- Remember to write down homework assignment – some children forget (accidentally or on purpose) to write down what the homework is. Give them points for remembering. (20 points for doing it.)
- Finish homework before play – some children will use the homework as a way to get your attention. In order to foster independence, you can encourage them with behavior charts, so they get positive attention for completing their homework. (10 points for doing it without reminders. 5 points for having to be reminded. 0 points for ignoring reminder.)
- Hand your homework to the teacher – some parents do battle with kids over homework every night and know that the homework was done; only to find out that the kid did not turn it in to the teacher. If your child is doing that, don't worry about the reason for this, simply give points for handing it in. (20 points for doing it.)
- Calm yourself down, take time to cool off – some children get really angry really fast and need to learn self soothing and self calming techniques. Most children are familiar with the concept to time out. Teach your kids to take their own time out to calm down instead of waiting until they blow up and get a time out from you. I typically explain to children who are brought to me that parents give time outs to teach them how to calm down and cool off – but they can do that for

themselves – it’s all part of growing up. (20 points for doing it without reminders. 10 points for having to be reminded. 0 points for ignoring reminder.)

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Brush teeth, dress, comb	0	10	10	0	10	0	10	
Calm body -calm voice	10	0	20	0	10	20	20	
Take time to cool off	0	20	10	10	0	20	20	
Avoid Arguing	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	
Share Toys	5	10	0	0	5	5	0	
Put Toys Away	5	5	5	10	10	10	5	
Play Nice	0	10	0	10	20	20	10	
Assignment Written Down	10	0	10	0	0	0	0	
Homework Completed	10	0	10	5	0	0	0	
Homework Handed in	0	10	0	10	10	0	0	
Total	40	65	65	45	65	80	70	430

BEHAVIOR CHARTS ON LINE

You can find behavior charts on the Web for free. However, you still have to specify the behaviors and the points or happy faces you will assign, and what they can be exchanged for. You may have noticed that I assigned more points to some of the behaviors. I did this on the basis that it takes more effort to accomplish those behaviors.

If you have an older child and don’t need cute charts, you can make one easily on Excel spreadsheet.

CHANGING THE BEHAVIOR CHARTS

When your child gets accustomed to accomplishing the behaviors you asked for on a consistent basis you may find that there are some other habits you would like them to develop, and change the behavior chart to specify those instead.

UNDERMINING THE PARENTS

Some parents and caretakers get into power struggles with each other. One of the parents or grandparents will want to show that they can get the child to comply

by bribing him. “I will take you for ice cream, if you play nice”. This may have been how you used to get your child to comply. The problem with this approach is that the child learns to manipulate the situation and control you in this way.

Please explain to all who care for your child that the point of the behavior chart is to develop good behavior habits so they become second nature to the child. This is not a contest about who is the better parent. The child is in training to be a pleasant, cooperative, self-directed and self-sufficient adult.