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**How To Use A Token Economy To Shape Your Child's Behavior.**

**By Destry Maycock**

A token economy is a behavioral modification technique that was first used in mental institutions to reinforce and establish desirable behaviors in their patients. Today you can find token economies being used in schools, treatment programs, and some families have found its usefulness in shaping their children's behavior. The token economy is a system in which targeted behaviors are reinforced with tokens (secondary reinforcers) and are later exchanged for rewards (primary reinforcers). Tokens can be in the form of fake money, buttons, poker chips, stickers, etc. While rewards can range anywhere from snacks to privileges/activities.

To establish a token economy in your home first you must identify the behaviors you want your children to change (desirable behaviors). These behaviors could include completing homework, brushing teeth, coming home on time, completing chores, not arguing, going to bed without a hassle, etc. You will want to limit your focus to a maximum of three or four behaviors at a time in order to keep things manageable.

Next, decide what you will use for tokens. You may want to assign different tokens for each of your children to reduce the risk of taking each other's tokens. You will also want to use something that can't be counterfeited.

Primary reinforcers need to be identified and can include such things as snacks, activities, or privileges like watching television, playing at a friends, computer time, etc. Now that the desired behaviors are identified, as are the primary reinforcers, you will need to set a value for each of them. That is, when a desired behavior occurs how many tokens is it going to be worth. Also, when your child wants to exchange the tokens they have earned for a primary reinforcer, there will need to be a predetermined value placed on the primary reinforcer. For example, if your child goes the entire day without fighting with their brother they could earn one or two tokens. As a primary reinforcer you could have playing at a friends house. It could cost them three tokens. The trick is striking the right balance between what they are earning each day and what they will typically expend on primary reinforcers. If tokens come too easily then the primary reinforcers lose their value. While if primary reinforcers are priced too high or tokens are too difficult to earn then your child may give up.

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Now that you have the system in place you are ready to implement it. First, identify three or four behaviors you want to reinforce. Then list them and decide how many tokens each behavior is going to be worth. You may want to put this list on the fridge or some place where it can be easily seen. Next you will identify what will be used as primary reinforcers and determine how many tokens each will cost. This list should be placed some place easily seen too.

When you catch your children engaging in the behaviors you have identified, reinforce the behavior by providing the predetermined number of tokens. It is important to couple the dispersing of tokens with a behavioral description of what you saw and verbal praise. Eventually, you will want to move on to other behaviors that you want to reinforce and will rely solely on verbal praise to maintain previously established behaviors. The reinforcement schedule should transition from a continuous schedule of reinforcement (1 behavior : 1 token) to a variable ration schedule of reinforcement (3–5 behavior : 1 token). Last you will fade out tokens completely using only praise to maintain the behavior. You will then focus on other behaviors and repeat the same pattern.

Your children will need to be responsible to keep track of and manage the tokens they earn. There will come a time when they will want to purchase a primary reinforcer. They should always pay for them before being allowed to engage in or partake of primary reinforcers otherwise the program loses its credibility. If they run out of or lose their tokens they simply can not purchase a primary reinforcer until they have earned enough.

What does this kind of a reinforcement system do for your children? It takes away the sense of entitlement a lot of kids have today. Instead of expecting privileges or activities for nothing on their part, they now have to earn them by the acquisition of tokens through their good behavior. A token economy can help a child be more responsible and teach them how to manage their resources. Something else that it does is teaches children to delay gratification where the world teaches them to expect and desire instant gratification. Lastly, the token economy can be used to extinguish misbehaviors and establish positive behaviors.

A token economy will require some effort on the part of the parent but the benefits far outweigh the small amount of time a parent has to invest in the program each day.

Destry Maycock has over eleven years experience working with children and families as a professional social worker. Destry has helped hundreds of parents solve a variety of parenting challenges and strengthen their relationships with their children. Destry enjoys developing products that help parents. Visit

<http://www.parentingstore.com>

to see the latest parenting programs.

## **Recognizing Your Success with Self Development**

**By Devlyn Steele**

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### Life Coach Advice

As an expert in self development, I can tell you that there isn't a person I have met yet that isn't successful. In fact, there isn't a person who is not successful. Not only are you successful, but everyone you know and don't know are successful as well. You question this? That is natural. After all, you may not feel all that successful and at the very least, you don't consider most people you have known or seen successful.

Yet, I still insist that everyone is successful no matter who they are and what they are doing. That is, without question, a fact. The question is not whether or not a person is successful; rather what they are being successful at.

Remove the idea that success means that there is a positive outcome. Think more about success as the ability to follow through with behavior to produce any outcome. A definition of success is "to end up with the intended result." Nothing is ever achieved, good or bad, without successful behavior.

The results in our lives (be they positive or negative) take time to realize. No one walks into a gym and gets in shape the same day. Getting in shape requires that you develop successful behavior towards the result of being in shape. First, the person makes a choice, either on a conscious or unconscious basis, which internalizes the decision to get in shape. Next, the person follows through with the behavior, works out, and eats correctly so that over time the result of being in shape is realized.

We consider the behavior of getting in shape and producing that result a success. Conversely, the same is true about negative results. It takes successful behavior to produce a negative outcome. Just as getting in shape takes time, an alcoholic does not become addicted the first time he or she has a drink. They internalize a decision either on a conscious or unconscious level and follow through with consistent behavior that successfully results in alcoholism.

Therefore, whether you are making money or not, either is a result of your successful behavior. If you are in shape or overweight, both are successes. Whether you have a good or a bad relationship, a job you like or not, A's or F's in school, everything is a result of the choices you are making and each is a success in that regard.

The importance of recognizing both your positive and negative results as successes means that you recognize that you do have the ability and power to produce results through successful behavior. What this also means is that you know how to be successful. The problem is not your inability to be successful, but rather the choices you make in what you decide to be successful towards.

This means that you do not need to learn how to be successful. You need to learn how to make different choices and then follow through with the successful behavior you already know. Interestingly enough this applies equally to negative and positive behavior. The most successful people you can think of in business, entertainment or other, often are not flourishing in other areas of their lives. One can have isolated success yet maintain a very unhappy or dissatisfied life.

I often challenge people to decide to mirror their positive successful behavior in all areas of their lives

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creating what I call a balanced successful life. You can achieve this through recognizing your successful behavior and working towards positive outcomes and self–development. The guidance of a proper self development program can work as a roadmap to the life you want to create.

I like to over simplify the idea of success and say that if you can put on a pair of shoes, then you are successful. In order to put on a pair of shoes a person has to first make a decision to do so, select the shoes they wish to put on then follow through with the behavior to put on the shoes. Once the shoes are on, that person has produced a success. The question now is what shoes are you successfully deciding to walk through your life in? The truth is you can wear any shoes you choose!

Life Coach Devlyn Steele is a passionate author in the field of self–improvement. He is striving to bring personal development to a new level of success with his new program,

[Http://www.Toolstolife.com](http://www.Toolstolife.com)

. To

find out all about Devlyn Steele and his guided self development program, please go to:

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