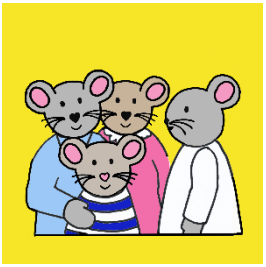
MICE Protocol

Rewards

Use This:

To establish a programme of rewards to increase desired behaviours.



Goals

- The family will understand the concept of reinforcement
- The family will establish a reward programme for the home that encourages positive behaviour and follow-through with instructions and requests
- The child will understand and agree to the reward programme
- The child will demonstrate increased motivation to participate in positive behaviours and in practice exercises that are part of the therapy programme

Materials

- ***Fear Thermometer*** and ***Fear Ladder*** (2 unrated copies, for anxiety/trauma), ***Feelings Thermometer*** (for depression) *(pp. 318, 320, 342)*
- ***Rewards*** parent handout *(p. 403)*
- Blank ***Behaviour Reward Chart*** (if necessary) *(p. 407)*
- Example ***Behaviour Reward Charts*** (if necessary) *(p. 408)*
- Blank paper and a pen
- ***Checklist of Strategies*** *(p. 391)*
- ***Weekly questionnaires*** and ***Monitoring sheet*** *(see pages 277-293)*
- ***Therapist Note Taking Sheet*** *(p. 276)*

> ***If time is tight:*** *Teach the family how tangible rewards can be used to increased desired behaviours, and work with the family to set up an organised system of rewards.*

Main steps	
☐ **Set an Agenda**	Remember to start by setting an agenda together and reviewing any practice assignments.
☐ **Obtain Weekly Ratings**	If the main focus is traumatic stress or anxiety, use the 0 to 10 scale of the ***Fear Thermometer*** to obtain ***Fear Ladder*** ratings from both the child and his or her parent. If the main focus is depressed mood, use the ***Feelings Thermometer*** to take a rating. Review ***Weekly questionnaires*** and ***Monitoring sheet*** in detail, in particular, examples of effective instructions and how it worked/didn't work.

☐	**Introduce Rewards to the Family**	Discuss with the family that some children require additional incentives, or rewards, to display the behaviours that we would like them to display. Let the parent/s know that he or she might already employ an informal reward programme with the child. Many parents provide positives when their child complies with rules and directives by promising special privileges, activities, allowances, or tangible rewards. In other cases, the parent may have less of a system in place in which case you are going to go through all the steps of creating a reward programme. Let the parent know that using a formal reward system will allow him or her to have greater influence over the child's behaviour. Explain to the family that you will be spending some time talking about the different kinds of activities the child enjoys doing. Discuss the idea of rewards with the child, and elicit several items or activities that the child would find rewarding. Be sure to ask the child for smaller and larger items that would be rewarding, while reminding the child that rewards do not have to be large to make us feel good. Getting the child's input is particularly important given that items or activities that are not valued by the child will not work well as rewards.
☐	**Make a List of Rewards**	Work with the family to add to the list of items and activities that the child finds rewarding. Try to have 10 to 15 items in total. Be careful to ensure that the parent contributes only those things that are truly enjoyable to the child. Encourage rewards that are small, can be given quickly, and do not cost much (if anything at all). For example, it is best to work with such things as praise, playing a game with a parent, going for a drive together, going shopping together, watching a TV programme, getting to stay up an extra half hour, picking a favourite meal for that night's dinner, or renting a film. Things like getting a bicycle or a new pet should be discouraged, or else saved for the completion of the treatment programme altogether. It is much more important to work on a list of things that can be given out day to day. Including some rewards on the list that the child is already receiving will help make sure the programme will be sustainable.

☐	**Make a List of Desired Behaviours**	Work with the family to create a list of specific desired behaviours. Try to make sure you phrase it positively. For example, the target behaviour would be doing as you are told rather than not being disobedient OR talking nicely rather than not swearing. Choose no more than three, and try to include one behaviour the child already does pretty well, to set the stage for success. More behaviours can be added later, after these the programme is going well. Some of the behaviours on the list might be directly related to elements of the therapy programme (e.g., completing practice assignments), whereas others might be related to general conduct, such as following a house rule or obeying a parental request.
☐	**Link Rewards to Behaviours**	Establish the connection between rewards and behaviour (sometimes called the "reinforcement schedule"). Select each behaviour and decide on a reward (or choice among several rewards) that can be paired with it. For younger children, the rewards will need to be especially frequent, so that every time the behaviour occurs, a small reward is given. You may wish to make a sticker or star chart since visual charts can work particularly well. Refer to the example ***Behaviour Reward Charts***. Work with the parent to identify what type of chart might be best for the child.
☐	**Discuss Amount of Rewards**	Explain the importance of the amount of reward given (sometimes called the "richness" of the reward programme). Point out that if too few rewards are given, the child will lose interest, and if rewards are too large or are given too often, the child will not work as hard to improve. The idea is to find that point in the middle that keeps the child interested and working. The "richness" of the programme will also change over time. The child should be rewarded more often in the beginning, to provide the opportunity to experience success. As time progresses, the programme should become more challenging, so that more good behaviour is expected to obtain the same level of rewards.
☐	**Discuss Timing of Delivering Rewards**	Warn the parent that he or she is to provide the reward only *after* the desired behaviour has occurred, never before. Also, rewards not only follow the desired behaviours, but they are "connected", meaning they do not occur at any other times. Inform the parent that he or she should not negotiate with the child or agree to an "advance" in rewards, particularly if the child wishes to participate in some desired activity now that he or she has not yet earned. Remind the parent to follow the rule that if the child has not completed the desired behaviour, he or she is not allowed to have access to the reward.

☐	**Discuss Close Approximations**	Tell the parent that children are much more likely to display desired behaviour to get rewards if the parents go out of their way to notice and reward the desired behaviour very frequently during the first week. Suggest to the parent that he or she should, for now, reward the child even for close approximations to the desired behaviour just to show the child how easy it is to earn rewards and to increase the child's desire to work with the parent to earn more rewards. Excessive strictness during the first week can be counterproductive, such that the child will not maintain a high level of motivation for cooperating with the programme.
☐	**Discuss Praise**	Remind the parent that the best reward is still going to be praise. Thus, when administering the rewards, the parent should use a pleasant tone of voice, taking care to label for the child exactly what behaviour is being rewarded and providing enthusiastic praise and appreciation to the child along with the reward. With enough praise, most children will learn over time to self-praise and to take pride in their own accomplishments. Thus, in the long run, they won't need rewards to keep the new behaviours going.
☐	**Emphasise Patience**	Emphasise to the parent the importance of being patient with this programme. Advise the parent that some children might show changes in compliance during the first day of the programme, whereas others might take several weeks to show significant gains. Some children might even refuse to engage in the desired behaviours, thinking that if they resist, the parents will give up and provide them with rewards anyway. Tell the parent that in such instances the programme should stay in effect and that you will problem-solve together how to get the programme working over time. Tell the parent that rewards, points and tokens should never be removed as a punishment for misbehaviour.
☐	**Manage Concerns: Bribery**	If the parent expresses concern that the reward system seems like bribing his or her child, discuss with the parent how this programme differs in two ways. First, bribes are often given before an expected behaviour (e.g., I give you a sum of money and then you let me join the team). Second, "bribery" generally means to offer an incentive for an illicit, immoral, or illegal act by another person. Indicate that this reward system is clearly not for those purposes but rather is similar to parents being paid for working. In a sense, it is simply a fair wage for a fair day's work by the child.

☐	**Manage Concerns: Special Treatment**	Many parents are also concerned that their child is being rewarded for doing things for which other children are not given rewards; in this case, the parent should be reminded that all children are rewarded for behaving well, they are just not rewarded so systematically (i.e., most children are provided with privileges, treats, or other rewards, but the fact that such things are provided for good behaviour is often not made explicit and sometimes not even connected to good behaviour).
☐	**Manage Concerns: Making Time**	If the parent expresses concern about how time-consuming the reward programme might be, assure him or her that although the programme will take more time during the initial few weeks, it will eventually become a habit for the parent and should help the parent get back more time in the long run as the child's problems improve.
☐	**Review Programme with Child and Parent**	Discuss the list and schedule of rewards with the family. Work to resolve in advance any disagreements or misunderstandings between the child and parent about how the system of rewards will work. The child should be told that, after meeting a particular task (e.g., doing his or her chores when requested to do so), he or she will get to pick something from the rewards chart. Discuss with the child and parent that these rewards are to be an ongoing part of working together. Suggest that the parent post the reward chart somewhere in the house (e.g., child's bedroom). If the child is not available to participate in this part of the module, encourage the parent to schedule a time to sit down with the child and go over these issues before starting the programme.
☐	**PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT** ***Rewards at Home***	The practice assignment requires the parent to review the ***Rewards*** handout, complete the blank ***Behaviour Reward Chart*** (if necessary), or create their own reward chart and to record on the ***Monitoring sheet*** each time the desired behaviour occurred and what he or she did when the behaviour occurred. The record will be reviewed to see if the rewards are being given quickly and consistently, and to track whether the desired behaviours are occurring with the desired frequency.
☐	**Send the materials for the next session**	Tell the parent/s you will send a written summary and the materials for the next session**.** Remind them that they <u>do not</u> need to be completed for next session as you will go through them together in the session. Tell the parent/s you will also send the ***Weekly Questionnaires, Monitoring sheet*** and ***Checklist of Strategies*** (if necessary) which need to be completed for the next session. Confirm date and time of the next call.
☐	**Summarising**	Ask if they would like you to summarise the session, if they want to summarise or if you should do it together.

Leave 'Em Laughing

If you have been working primarily with the parent up until now, end the session on a positive note with the parent. Perhaps you can talk about things that are unrelated to his or her child or discuss an area of interest you have in common. This time at the end of each session should be used to praise the parent's efforts and to convey support and encouragement. If you have been working primarily with the child up until now, end the session on a fun note with the child, by starting a game or some other activity that will leave the child feeling really good about the work you have done together today.

Special Cases

Anxiety	When working with the parent to create a list of desired behaviours to target with rewards, the list should include current treatment goals (e.g., practising coping skills or items on the ***Fear Ladder***).
Depression	Rewards may be used to support depression treatment by targeting behaviours needed for the treatment to work. For example, the desired behaviours might include completion of role-plays or activities with the therapist, or completion of practice assignments by the child between sessions.
Younger Children	The reward schedule should be as easy as possible at first, and the more immediate the rewards the better. The programme can always be made more challenging later. As a general rule, the child should get rewarded on the first or second day of starting the programme. After he or she does well, the behaviours on the list can be changed to be more challenging, or they can be rewarded less frequently.

Helpful Tips

- The key to a successful reward programme is to keep the schedule from being too easy or too hard. Each meeting after the programme is first established may require consideration of whether to adjust the reward or the points given for each behaviour. If the child has not earned any rewards, the programme should be made easier (e.g., can the goal be approximated or done halfway at first? Can a simpler task be chosen for now?). If the child is getting rewards very often, it is time to make the programme slightly more challenging. When discussing such changes with a child, it is helpful to emphasise the similarity with someone "getting in shape." As you get better and stronger, you lift more weight or you run further each day. This is a sign that you are really making progress.
- With frequent behaviours (for example, saying "please" or "thank you"), it is not always possible to give out rewards each time the behaviour occurs. In such cases it can be helpful to provide the child with a point system or sticker chart. Older children can simply earn points that are recorded on a score sheet. Younger children can get tokens (e.g., plastic game chips) or stickers to put up on a calendar or chart. In the latter case, it can be helpful to make this calendar or chart together in the session. Each time the child performs the desired behaviour, a point or token or sticker is given. These points can later be cashed in for items on the chart.

- An important consideration with this module is sensitivity to class or economic background of the family. With all families, it is important to emphasise that the best rewards do not cost money, but with economically disadvantaged families, it is especially important to be explicit about this issue. Be sure that at least 10 items on the rewards menu do not cost any money, and be especially reassuring that consistency, frequency, and immediacy of reward delivery are *always* more important than the material value of the reward.
- If both parents live at home with the child, both should be strongly encouraged to be active in administering rewards to their child. Having both parents participate in the reward programme increases the consistency of child management procedures between the parents.
- Parents should review the list of rewards with the child every few weeks to see if new rewards should be added, or if others should be removed from the list because they are no longer of value to the child.
- If the parent is worried that he or she might have difficulty remembering to reward the child consistently, it is often helpful for parents to place small reminders to themselves in conspicuous places. For example, the parent might place small stickers or reminder notes in places that they see often, such as on a clock, mirror, telephone, or television.
- If the parent asks how long the reward programme will be kept in place, explain that such a programme often lasts about 2 months. Most commonly, families will find that the programme gradually becomes phased-out without any systematic efforts to do so. If the parent wishes to remove the programme formally, suggest that he or she do so for 1 to 2 days to see how well the child behaves without formal rewards. If the child is able to maintain the expected positive behaviours during this time, the parent can continue to extend this trial period indefinitely, and if problems arise, the programme can be resumed as needed.
- Once the reward system is well established, a list of behaviours associated with loss of privileges (separate from those given as a reward) can be drawn up with the parents.

How's Your Style?

- Did you praise often?
- Did you review often, by asking questions?
- Did you simplify the steps as needed?
- Did your pace match that of the child or family?
- Did you stay on track?