

## **“Since, Then”**

### **One Simple, Powerful Technique**

The following technique is most effective with older children, in their mid to late teens but works with any child.

Often, we tell our kids if you do “this”, then you get “that.” It is a principle that is informally known as “Grandma’s Law.” You tell the child the reward they will earn if they engage in a specific behavior. It is how we are paid by our employers. We work forty hours during the week, and we then get a paycheck for the forty hours worked.

For example, when a child demands a drink of punch, grandma might say, “Say please, and I will get you a drink of punch.” “If you take out the garbage, you will earn a treat.” We might tell a child, “When you get your chores done, then you can play.” “If you argue with me then you will have to take a timeout.” “If you are late, then you will be grounded for a day.” We are also using it when we say, “When you get an A paper in English, then I will buy you a candy bar.” Another example is “if you earn 10,000 points, then you get your privileges.”

It teaches cause and effect thinking and helps our youth understand that in life very little is “free” and almost always must be earned. It also teaches them a link between their behavior and the consequences, both positive and negative that they receive.

Unfortunately it is limited to just impacting our youth in the here and now.

### **The Technique**

The more powerful technique, and one that takes some thinking ahead, is rewarding behavior after it has occurred. It is similar to having your boss provide a bonus for exceptional work that has already been completed.

For example, after a child has returned home on time from an activity saying, “Since you came home on time, you may go out again with your friends tomorrow night.” “Since you completed your chores on time, here is a candy bar.” “Because you have been doing so well with following instructions, using all the steps this week, I will let you pick the video for the family movie night.”

This type of teaching motivates a child in the same way if/then does but it can impact them positively for a much longer period of time. The youth will try to find ways to be reinforced by doing positive things without being told, reminded or prompted. The key is noticing positive behavior and reinforcing it constantly, after it has occurred.

You have numerous occasions where you are buying things for your family: movie rentals, food, toys, small treats and also times when you want to do things with them. Rather than just doing them, attach them to a positive behavior that you have seen. It is that simple. It creates an opportunity for more praise and will improve the environment in your home.