

Rewarding yourself for small steps and milestones

Posted by MenachemGYE - 28 Jan 2020 10:49

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*Punishment is rarely used by successful self-changers or therapists. Not only is it ethically questionable, it tends to suppress problem behavior temporarily rather than lead to lasting change. Rewards, on the other hand, are often successfully used to change behavior. — Dr James O. Prochaska, *Changing for Good**

Quitting smoking happens one minute, one hour, one day at a time. Reward yourself throughout your quit. Celebrate individual milestones, including being 24 hours smokefree, one week smokefree, and one month smokefree. Quitting smoking is hard, be proud of your accomplishments.

Next Steps: You should be proud every time you hit a quit smoking milestone. Treat yourself with a nice dinner, day at the movies, or any other smokefree activity. Plan out your milestones ahead of time and set up a smokefree reward for each one — [US Department of Health](#)

This thread is about collecting on ideas on good ways to reward yourself for staying clean. We can reward ourselves when we reach a milestone in the 90 day chart, for each day clean, or even for taking small steps like making a plan, installing a filter etc. These rewards can be included to [your plan](#) to make it more official...

The moment I begin speaking about using rewards to change behavior, most people give me a quizzical look. “Well, sure, I use them on others, but not on myself,” they say. The time has come to learn how to reward yourself. We will use rewarding to strengthen your goal behavior in a systematic, intentional way. A reward—or reinforcement, as we psychologists call it—consists of any consequence that increases the frequency or strength of a target behavior. —Dr. John C. Norcross, *Changeology*

Has anyone here tried this? If yes, I'd love to hear what worked for you.

For rewards to be effective it's best that they should be tangible, satisfying and pleasurable, and accessible (not something you promise to give yourself next year...) - See Handbook of Alcoholism Treatment Approaches, page 157.

Here's some ideas to start with:

- Self praise (*Credit: Changing for good*). Internal congratulations, personal affirmations, soothing praise. (Changeology). Giving yourself a compliment out loud. For example, "I'm doing a really great job!" (*Group Treatment for Substance Abuse*)
- Rewards involving time, e..g giving yourself 30 minutes or an hour to do a favorite activity. This is especially good for busy people. (*Credit: Handbook of Alcoholism Treatment Approaches*).
- Going to a favorite restaurant (*CDC.gov*). Eating a favorite food or drink (*Group Treatment for Substance Abuse*)
- Taking a hot bath (*ibid*)
- Playing a sport or exercising (*ibid*)
- Reading a favorite book or magazine (*ibid*)
- Spending time with a friend (*ibid*)
- "Verbal praise, attention, affectionate touches from others". (Changeology)
- "Secondary reinforcers to be exchanged for rewards at a later time, such as chips, stars, and happy faces." (*Ibid*)
- "Remove a dreaded chore: Sometimes we only think of giving ourselves a pleasurable consequence, but remember that removing an aversive chore by getting someone else to do it constitutes a powerful reward too" (*Ibid*)

Notes:

1. The idea of how rewards help us reinforce new behaviors is discussed at length in the book *The Power of Habit*.
2. Although we strive for our motivations to be *lishmah*, in this case the end justifies the means, see the Rambam's into to Perek Chelek, and as Chazal say "*mitoch shelo lishma ba lishma*". Also, rewards will never become the *reason* why we are trying to change, it's just a little way to trick our brain into learning the new behavior.

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