**Free or Low-cost Reinforcers for Appropriate Behavior**

***Compiled by***

***Laura A. Riffel, Ph.D.***

***Jessica R. Eggleston, Ed.D.***

[***caughtyoubeinggood@gmail.com***](mailto:caughtyoubeinggood@gmail.com)

[**Jessaeggleston@gmail.com**](mailto:Jessaeggleston@gmail.com)

***Based on research compiled since 2004***

******

**Over 100 Free or Inexpensive Reinforcements for Family Members to Offer Their Children for Appropriate Online Behavior with Ideas of Things to do While Quarantined**

**Young Children**

1. Ask your children if they’d rather have a dollar a day for thirty days or a penny a day that doubles each day for 30 days. In other words, on day one 1 cent, day two 2 more cents, day three 4 cents and so on. Once they decide then help them figure out which one would have been the better deal. $10,737,418. 23 at the end of 30 days with the double the pennies per day. This is just a hypothetical situation; they don’t really get the money ☺ But it’s a fun interaction. Just a fun interaction.
2. Assist the Family Member with a household chore or Family Member helps with one child chore
3. Attach cork panels to a wall in the kitchen or put in a large picture frame and put a special piece of art, poetry, or an exceptional paper on the board and have the entire family view and comment at dinner on the highlighted piece.
4. Bury treasures in a sandbox for the child to find. Put letters in plastic Easter eggs and they must put the letters together that spell treat the child will receive. (Ideas: a walk with grandma, bike riding at the park, etc.)
5. Let your child use the camera on your phone or iPad and have them take pictures and then gather the family with popcorn and watch the video on your television by hooking the camera to the television or upload to the computer and attach the computer to the television. Have everyone choose a favorite photo and talk about it.
6. Let your child use your phone and take pictures that you turn into a PowerPoint presentation instead of watching television.
7. Camp out in the backyard with a parent.
8. Change the screen saver on your computer to say “My child is the greatest.” …or something that would make them feel good about themselves.
9. Let your child draw or paint pictures for a nursing home. Let the glitter fly.
10. Dig shapes in the sandbox and then decorate with items found around the house. Pour inexpensive plaster of Paris into the shape and wait to dry. When it’s pulled out it will be a sandy relief that can be hung on the wall (if you remember to put a paper clip in the plaster of Paris on the top before it dries ☺)
11. Download a fun recipe and let your child help you make that recipe as a surprise for the rest of the family that evening. (Put up signs that say “Secret Cooking in Progress”. Must have special pass to enter the kitchen.
12. Find an old croquet set- probably on Ebay. Set up croquet in your yard and challenge your child to a game of croquet. The winning child gets to choose what the family eats for dinner.
13. Find an old-fashioned popcorn popper (not an air popper). Spread an old sheet out on the living room floor, put a little oil in the popper and then have your children sit outside the perimeter of the sheet. Put a few kernels of popcorn in the popper and watch them fly up in the air. The kids will love watching this. For a special treat pour cinnamon sugar on the popcorn after it pops. You might have one down in the basement.
14. Find some light balsa wood and create a boat powered by a rubber band and paper clip paddle wheel. Make a unique sail and take the boat to a creek or lake nearby and help your child launch their boat. Be sure to take a butterfly net to retrieve the boat when it goes downstream. (Proactively, you could put an eye hook on the front of the boat and attach some fishing line to it so it can be brought back to shore. Keeping social distancing- if not possible, use an old child’s swimming pool.
15. Go for a scavenger hunt ride around the neighborhood looking for 5 things you could touch, 4 things you could hear, 3 things you could smell, 2 things you could taste, and 1 thing that shines.
16. Draw pictures and send to your local police department for protecting us during the quarantine.
17. Get to be the first person to share 3 stars and a wish at the dinner table (3 good things that happened that day and one thing they wish had gone better.)
18. Get to choose the game the family plays together that night
19. Get to choose the story the family reads out loud together (read the classics)
20. Get to choose what is fixed for dinner that night- example: “You get to choose: I can make tacos or meatloaf. Which do you want me to fix?” (This was my personal children’s favorite)
21. Get to create a family night activity- roller skating in the driveway, hiking in the park, picnic dinner on the living room floor or under the dining room table with blankets over the top.
22. Get to decorate paper placemats for the dining room table for dinner that evening
23. Draw pictures to send to the medical personnel at your closest hospital.
24. Get to help with online grocery shopping. Choosing one item that is just for them.
25. Get to make a hammock by tying a sheet over top of table and creating a pocket under the dining room table.
26. Get to have a picture framed for mom or dad’s home office
27. Get to help Family Member fix dinner- shell peas, peel potatoes, make art out of vegetables, make ants on a log etc. Pinterest has lots of “make animals out of food” ideas.
28. Give your child a nice piece of Manila paper and some wax crayons. Have them color a design on every inch of the paper- could be stripes or wavy lines- whatever they desire. Then have them cover the entire page with black crayon. They color over the entire page. Then give them a paper clip and have them open one end and scratch a cool design into the black crayon. The colors underneath will show through. Do an art gallery tour and have tea and cookies after looking at the different pictures.
29. Give your child a special piece of jewelry that belongs to you to keep and wear for the day. (Nothing that costs a lot of money- but something that looks like it is special to you.) The child will feel special all day long.
30. Go outside and collect cool leaves and flowers. Come inside and put those leaves and flowers between two sheets of wax paper. The Family Member will iron these two sheets together and create placemats for everyone in the family for the evening.
31. Gather boxes and let the children decorate them to create a village, spaceship, or anything they might like to build.
32. Have everyone dress up in fancy clothes and come to dinner. Watch a little Downton Abby and pretend it’s a very fancy dinner.
33. Have a talent night for the family. Have everyone keep it a secret what they are doing and then perform for each other.
34. Have the bedroom fairy come while they are doing quiet reading time and choose the bedroom that was left the cleanest. That child gets to sit in dad’s chair at dinner or for television that evening.
35. Have your child collect some toys they have outgrown. Clean up the toys and be ready to donate them when the quarantine is over.
36. Help your child organize their room giving them a mnemonic to help them remember where things go- for instance teach them the color order of the rainbow and then teach them to hang up their clothes in color groups matching the order of the rainbow (ROYGBIV). Later on when you catch them hanging up their clothes in the correct place draw a “rainbow” award for their good work and put it on their door as a surprise when they come back to their room.
37. Let your child design thank you cards, birthday cards, or holiday cards and use them to send to friends and relatives. Make sure they sign their work.
38. Let your child dictate a story to you. Then they will illustrate it and you will read and share it at dinner.
39. Let your child earn 5 minutes of either staying up later or sleeping in in the morning. Use that time to read together if they stay up later.
40. Let your child help you do the laundry and then pay them with a special dessert for dinner. Be sure to say, “Since you helped me save time by helping me fold the laundry, I have time to make this special dessert for dinner.”
41. Let your child take the digital camera out in the back yard and then come back in and turn those pictures into a story on the computer. Help them print off their book for a distant family member.
42. Make a story on the computer with your child using Microsoft’s PowerPoint program. Let your child be the star of the story.
43. Make Papier-mâché masks by taking punch ball balloons and spreading the paper strips over the balloon shape. Make noses, horns, tongues whatever they desire and then paint when dry. You will have a unique and free mask and you will have given your child tons of attention.
44. Make special mud pies in the backyard with mom or dad or have a family contest to see who can make the best mud pie.
45. Mystery grab bag. Take an old pillow case and put slips of paper inside listing some of the reinforcers on this page and let the child draw out the reinforcer they are going to get for their behavior reinforcer.
46. Play hide and go seek in your house in the dark. Turn out all the lights and have everyone hide. One person is “it” and they must go around the house and find the people who are hiding. It’s really a great way to help your children not be afraid of the dark. You can limit it to one or two rooms if your children are young. My kids loved this as well.
47. Have your child dictate a play to you and then the whole family acts it out.
48. Play the “Gatekeeper Game” with your child. You make up cards of animals (pictures or words)- hold out your arms like a gatekeeper. As the child approaches with a card, tell them the animal can pass or not pass. If they can pass, the child lays the card down behind you. Otherwise, the card is discarded. At the end of all the cards, the child has to decide why some animals got through and others didn’t. (Could be farm animals, animals with four legs, animals that can fly, animals that lay eggs- lots of possibilities)
49. Send an email to a relative telling them what a good job they had done on a project at online school. In other words, email Aunt Linda and tell her about the “A” you got on your spelling test.
50. Find writing, acting, guitar lessons etc. online and let your child pursue that talent.
51. Start a family story at the dinner table and each person in the family must tell a part of the story. The child being reinforced gets to start and end the story.
52. Surprise your child with a scavenger hunt around the house. If they read, give them written clues hinting as to where the next card is hiding. At the end have them find a note that tells them their big reinforcer. (If your child can’t read, you can use pictures.)
53. Take a tension curtain rod and put it in the door frame with some old curtains attached. Let your child put on a talent show for you as they enter through the curtain, or a puppet play- you can make sock puppets.
54. Call grandma and grandpa or any other relative and share knock-knock jokes with them. You can find appropriate ones online.
55. If possible with social distancing- Take your child fishing. It’s a great place to have some really in-depth conversations (I heard adults don’t have to have a license to fish right now)
56. Take your child for a ride looking for items that start with each letter of the alphabet. Take the child’s picture in front of each item that starts with that letter and then put it together as an ABC Book. For example: “This is Johnny in front of Applebees.” “This is Johnny in front of BlockBuster.” And so on….
57. Take your child on a nature walk and collect rocks. Bring the rocks back home and have a contest painting the rocks to look like animals.
58. Take an online tour of a museum and then have your child choose a painting and either dress up like that or draw it.
59. Have your child draw cards and notes for the local fire department.
60. If you can afford it, order some glow in the dark stars. Put them under the dining room table after you have let them soak up the sun all day. Then put a blanket over the table and let them move the stars around to form constellations.
61. Do an online tour of a zoo and have your child do a scavenger hunt for the following:
    1. Animal that flies
    2. Animal that is a carnivore
    3. Animal that is a mammal
    4. Animal that is a reptile
    5. Animal that is all one color
    6. Animal that is an amphibian
    7. Animal that is an herbivore
    8. Animal that is nocturnal
    9. Animal that is two colors
    10. Animal that swims
    11. Animal with a tail
    12. Animal with four legs
    13. Animal with spots
    14. Animal with stripes
    15. Animal with two legs
    16. Animal you can pet
    17. Animal you cannot pet
62. Make a big book. If you have a sewing machine. Have your children draw and write stories on large pieces of construction paper. Then sew the edges with your machine, make a cover with cardboard that you decorate and make a giant book of their story or art work.
63. Teach your child how to darn a sock and then turn it into a magical sock puppet. Put on puppet shows for each other.
64. Teach your child how to throw a football, shoot a basket, kick a field goal, hit a baseball, and putt a golf ball. Then for fun, switch hands and try to do all of those things with the opposite side of the body.
65. Tell your children you have a surprise performance for them. Get a stocking cap and lay on a sturdy table with your head hanging chin up in the air. Cover all of your face with the stocking cap except your chin and mouth. Draw two eyeballs on your chin and then lip sync to a silly song. It looks really funny, like a little headed person with a big mouth singing. Then let your child put on a performance for you.
66. Turn your dining room table into a cave by covering it with blankets, quilts and sheets that cover the top and sides down to the floor. Lay inside the cave and draw picture by flashlight to hang on the wall of the cave- just like the caveman drawings. You can safety pin the pictures to the “cave walls”.
67. Write a story for your child where the child or their personal hero is a character in the story. I once wrote a story where Michael Jordan went back in time and saved the Pilgrims and the Indians at the first thanksgiving by shooting a basket to catch a turkey. My son liked it so much, he made his dad read it at Y-Indian Guides.

**Teenagers**

1. Do you have some leftover paint at your house? Let your teen paint a mural in their room. My parents let me do this as a teen and I loved it. I planned it out.
2. Choose a family member of the month and make a poster of them. Let them choose Friday night dinners for the month.
3. Do some research for your teenager. For example, if your teen is studying Greek Mythology go online and find something obscure and interesting about Greek Mythology for them
4. Do your own *Trading Spaces*. Family Members redecorate the teen’s bedroom and the teen redecorates the parent’s bedroom (Nothing permanent allowed- no murals here)
5. Have a contest to see who can find something that no one in the family can guess what it is. For example, a shirt stay, or the inside spring to a toy, things that might not be recognizable away from their use.
6. Have everyone come to the table with a quote and then a contest to see who can guess who made the quote famous.
7. Help your teen become a big brother or sister to a child who needs a mentor. There is no greater gift you can give yourself than that of service to someone in need. This can be an online mentor to a younger child in the neighborhood.
8. Help your teenager organize their notebook using color coded folders for each subject and pocket folders for study cards.
9. Help your teenager study for a test by downloading a free *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* PowerPoint game and put the answers to your teenagers’ test into the game and then play to help them study.
10. Hide positive messages all over your teenager’s room, in their books they use at home, on their bathroom mirror, etc.
11. Hire your child to be an interior decorator and using only items available in the house, redo a room in the house.
12. Let them drive the good car around the neighborhood with you.
13. See if there is a dog training program for training assistant dogs. This could be a quarantine project to train a dog for someone who needs their dog trained.
14. Let your teenager play their music during dinner and talk to you about why they like each song that plays.
15. Make a deal. If your child maintains the grades you agree upon, does not have any unnecessary absences from online learning, and has been agreeable, they earn the ability to stay up all night on Friday night and control the TV.
16. Make a scrap book of your teenager and their friends with ticket stubs and pictures and present at a surprise family party.
17. Make a special mix album for your teen of their favorite songs. You can upload I-tunes and then copy the songs you know they like. Kind of like mix tapes we used to make in the 80’s- they’ll think it’s funny.
18. Make flash cards for your student’s exams to help them study for a big exam.
19. Have your teen write thank you notes to the district attorney, judge, bailiff, defense attorney, and court reporter. They are all still working during quarantine and it is a profession few think about.
20. Organize a family football or basketball game “oldies” vs. “youngsters” or “men” vs. “Women” and then have a family BBQ afterward
21. Go on a scavenger hunt around the house looking for loose change- washer, sofa cushions, pants pockets, coat pockets. Gather it all together and then have a contest guessing how much it is. Whoever is closest gets to have the money.
22. Scan your teenager’s papers or artwork and have them bound in a book (www.lulu.com has inexpensive binding available). Present the book to your teenager at a special dinner.
23. Surprise them with their favorite dessert for no special reason.
24. Surprise your teen with a scavenger hunt all over the house. Make the clues hard to figure out. I always had a little reinforcer at the end like baseball cards.
25. Ask the older children in your family to design activities for the younger children. Call it Sibling Camp. They will have fun thinking up activities.
26. Tape record your student’s study questions onto a recorder for them so they can listen to them while they are going to sleep.
27. Teach your children how to play a game like *Spoons, Canasta, Poker*, etc. And have a family game night.
28. Teenagers have a difficult time with their emotions. Download yoga lessons from online and do yoga breathing exercises together as a family. Talk to your child about using these techniques when they feel tense at school.
29. Find karate, judo, tae kwon do lessons online and let your child take the online lessons.
30. Turn out all the lights in the house and play hide and go seek in the dark. The person that can stay hidden the longest gets to choose the movie the family watches on Saturday night. Our personal children loved this well into their teens because they got better at hiding.
31. Use plastic Easter eggs and put dollar amounts in the eggs on slips of paper and number the eggs with a permanent marker. Play *Deal or No Deal* with one of the Family Members playing the banker.
32. Watch an old black and white classic movie together and talk about how movies have changed. My children loved “Harvey” with Jimmy Stewart when they were teenagers.
33. Watch Jeopardy and give each family member a pad of post it notes or index cards. Have everyone write down what they think the answer is and keep points. The person who wins gets to pick what the family does as an activity that weekend.
34. Write a story about the 20 things you love about them. Include fun pictures.
35. Write half a story or poem and let your teenager write the other half. Submit the story for publication.
36. Do cake wars between family members.
37. Do chop it- and they must design a meal with certain ingredients.
38. Have your teen design a dinner that is exactly 500 calories. They’ll have to do some research and you might only get one green bean to equal the 500 calories.
39. Let your teen paint containers you have in the garage for holding your tools etc.
40. Ask your teen to organize all the tools and give them a reinforcer for their genius organizational skills.
41. Have a contest- choose two closets and two children. Have them organize the closet and then have a different family member choose which one is the most organized. That child wins a reinforcer.
42. Let your teen develop a new popcorn flavor for family night at the movies
43. Let your teen research a new dessert to make for the family
44. Make fancy “mocktails” for your teen for their great behavior. If you dig around in your house, you can probably find some little cocktail umbrellas or stir sticks.
45. Learn a new art skill like acrylic pouring or watch a video on how to do a craft and emulate it at home.
46. Take some fabric you have at home and let them reupholster a piece of old furniture- an old ottoman, a chair seat, an office chair. Then they get to have that piece of furniture in their room.
47. Take an old piece of furniture you inherited from Great Aunt Sally, that you really don’t know what to do with- have your teen strip it and repaint it, or do faux painting on it. Then they can have the piece of furniture for your room. My daughter made leopard print chairs and ended up taking them to college with her.
48. Take an old pair of white tennis shoes and fabric paint and paint designs on the tennis shoes
49. Take an old shirt and turn it into something new. There are videos online about how to turn a T-shirt into a beach bag and things like that.
50. Make a family quarantine quilt. Cut squares and have everyone in the family design their square- you could even mail some off to family members and then return them. Sew the quilt together and then put a backing on it with quilt batting in between. This can be a fond memory in the future.
51. Take all your teens old T-shirts and turn the shirts into a quilt. We did this for my oldest son, and he is the proudest of that quilt.
52. Take an old black and white movie and change the words- like Riff Tracks. Use iMovie on iPhones or iPads and it will let you add words- you can turn off the volume and read the close caption you put in.
53. If you can afford, give your child an allowance to order some seeds off Amazon, or any of the nurseries that deliver. Let them design a space in the backyard that is their own with a horticulture design.
54. Since prom has been cancelled, let your teen dress up in their finest (some had already purchased dresses etc.) – then do a zoom party with one serving as a DJ and the kids can take turns doing dance-offs
55. Host a horse basketball tournament online- first child shoots a shot and then the other child must duplicate the shot at their location.
56. My nieces and nephews still like to play Monopoly when they come to visit and they are all over 20. We stay up until the wee hours of the morning. This could be a fun Friday night activity.
57. Host a trivia night via zoom. Help your child get together trivia questions that you send out to their friends. They take turns asking trivia questions online and then someone keeps score to see who got the most points- or just play for fun.

**Notes for your ideas:**