

Points

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Q1 2014

This morning my daughter sent me an email describing a strategy that one young mother devised for teaching her children to be responsible. The letter went something like this:

Congratulations!
You've been grounded!!!
To get un-grounded, you must earn 500 points

- Write a nice letter to someone in the family = 10 points
- Prepare and cook dinner = 50 points
- One load of laundry (wash, dry, fold, put away) = 100 points
- Clean and organize a kitchen cupboard = 50 points per cupboard
- Empty dishwasher = 25 points
- Load dishwasher = 40 points

...you get the picture.

The approach, brilliant in its simplicity, ties misbehavior with consequences and provides benefits to boot! I got such a kick out of this because I devised a similar system when my children were young, except that I chose positive reinforcement instead of a punitive point system. 15 points and my children earned an ice cream.

- Make your bed = 1 point
- Take out the trash = 1 point
- Read for 30 minutes = 2 points

And my personal favorite:

- Swim around the dock at night = 5 points
(you have never seen two kids move so fast in all of your life)!

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To this day my kids still remind me of how much they had to do to earn an ice cream when I probably would have taken them out for one anyway. We were kidding around with our son, ever the saver, that he probably still had “the first point he ever earned.” His reply: “Yup – I have all my points. I am ready to cash in and actually buy the ice cream store instead of just an ice cream.” Now that’s the kind of logic that I can embrace.

CAR #0522-01115

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