

66. Teddy Bears



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To help children consider both the positive and negative sides of their actions and learn to evaluate their long-term consequences. A single action may seem unimportant, yet its effects can be considerable - even decisive - either by reinforcing a weakness or by helping to overcome it.

1. Ask the child to describe the illustration in their own words.

2. Sample question to highlight the metaphor.

- If you put coins only into the bow-tie bear, which of the two bears will become richer?

3. Connect the metaphor to a problem the child is facing.

SELF-CONTROL



If the child is extremely shy, help them understand that every time they deliberately avoid trying to overcome their discomfort, they put coins into the bow-tie bear. When they refuse to say hello or approach someone, they feed their shyness and make it even harder to connect with others. When they make an effort to initiate contact, however, they invest in the necktie bear, and overcoming their shyness gradually becomes easier. When using this illustration, be sure to acknowledge even the smallest effort and help the child appreciate the sense of well-being, pride, and strength it produces.

SCHOOL



What are your bow-tie-bear and necktie-bear behaviors at school? If the activity takes place in a school setting, divide the students into small groups. Ask some groups to identify four or five bow-tie-bear behaviors at school, others to list necktie-bear behaviors, and still others to suggest ways of encouraging the necktie-bear behaviors and increasing how often they occur. Guide the children toward positive reinforcement - congratulating, thanking, and encouraging - rather than negative consequences such as punishment or removing privileges. Positive reinforcement is clearly more effective.

OTHER



Together with the child, make a list of bow-tie-bear actions they have taken - fighting, lying, and so on - and necktie-bear actions, such as controlling their reactions or completing a task even when they did not feel like doing it. Highlight the advantages and disadvantages they experienced after each action. You can even place one copy of the illustration on the refrigerator for every member of the family, including the parents. Whenever someone performs a necktie-bear action, record it on that person's necktie bear with a sticker - an angel, heart, or star. Mark bow-tie-bear behaviors in the same way, but with an "X." This activity helps children and parents realize that adults also make mistakes and that everyone, at every age, must continue trying to improve.