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*Watching Your Child's Weight Series:*

**LESSON WIC CF-000-10**  
**Don't Use Food As a Reward or Punishment**

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**OBJECTIVES:**

Participants will be able to:

- Name or list ways they can reward or punish their child without food.
- Name the reason why rewarding and setting limits can prevent a child from becoming overweight.

**MATERIALS FOR THE LESSON:**

Chalkboard/Chalk, Flipchart/Pen, or Magnetic board

Discussion Questions (attached)

Optional Handout: TDH pamphlets #13-75 (English) and 13-75a (Spanish),  
*"Watching Your Child's Weight"*

**July 1996**

**Lesson WIC CF-000-10**  
**Don't Use Food as a Punishment or Reward**

**OPENER:**

**Ask participants the following questions:**

“What are some ways that you have used food as a reward or punishment for your child?”

**Let participants share ideas. Do not try and correct any misconceptions here.**

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES:**

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Today we are going to talk about how to set healthy limits with your children and ways to reward and punish your child without using food. Let's discuss limit setting first. Setting limits is telling your child how you want him to behave. It also means following through to be sure he receives rewards for good behavior and reasonable punishment for bad behavior.

Examples of setting healthy limits include:

- Limits on how much TV your child can watch.
  - Limits on how late your child can stay up.
  - Limits on how your child can act - no hitting, no throwing toys, etc.
  - Limits on how much time your child can spend lying around and being inactive.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Why is it important to set limits? How can setting limits help keep your child from becoming too fat?
    - Children need structure. It helps them to feel safe and secure.
    - If you do not set limits (e.g., let him watch all the TV he wants, lay on the couch all day, etc.), he will not learn healthy habits.
  3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Once you've set limits, then you need to follow through by rewarding or punishing your child depending on what they do. For example, if your child picks up his toys, then you should reward him somehow. But child development specialists say that it's not a good idea to use food as a reward or punishment for your child. Can you think of some reasons why?

- Rewards are given to make a child feel happy. If the only way you reward a child is by giving him food, he may learn that the only way he can only become happy is to eat food. He may overeat just to feel good - not because he is hungry. Children should find Other ways to be happy besides eating.

- Punishments should teach a child how to behave well. Some types of punishment send the wrong message. For example, if you punish a child by hitting him, you are sending the message that it's ok to hit others. Likewise, if you punish a child by making him go to bed hungry, you're sending the message that it's ok to be hungry and skip meals.

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What are some ways to reward your child for good behavior besides giving food? (You may want to help illustrate these points using a chalkboard or flipchart.)

- Praise child for good behavior.
- Give hugs.
- Spend time with child.
- Other rewards might include buying something special, watching a favorite TV show, letting a friend stay overnight, a trip to the zoo, etc.

5. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Why do children need special attention, praise, hugs, rewards, etc? How can doing these things prevent a child from becoming overweight?

- Praising a child helps to improve his behavior. For example, you should look for a time when your child is doing something right and praise him - Johnny, you did a good job of picking up your room. Praising/rewarding a child usually works better than criticism or punishment.

- Receiving attention, praise, hugs, and rewards makes a child feel good about himself. If a child does not receive these things, he may feel bad about himself. In order to block out the bad feelings, the child may overeat or sit passively watching TV for hours on end and gain too much weight.

- Children also need "unconditional love" - you can tell them that you love them even if they don't always behave well.

6. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What situations do you punish your child? What types of punishment do you use?

- You may use punishment when you've told your child what you expected him to do, and he did not do it (e.g., pick up his toys, hit his sister, complained about having to do something, etc.)

- Time out is a good example of punishment - have child go sit in the corner for 5 minutes.

- Other types of punishment include: not getting to watch TV for the evening, grounded from going out to play with friends, having to do extra chores around the house, etc.

7. Have class participants summarize the key points of the discussion.

**NE CODE CF-000-10**

**Lesson Evaluation Form for Staff**

(Please complete this evaluation the first time you use this lesson)

Month/Year of lesson use: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Was the lesson easy to read and follow?  
a. yes                      b. no
  
2. Did participants respond to questions asked throughout the lesson?  
a. yes                      b. no
  
3. Was participant feedback:  
a. positive  
b. negative  
c. indifferent
  
4. Was the Spanish translation of the lesson appropriate?  
a. yes                      b. no
  
5. Do you plan to use this lesson again?  
a. yes                      b. no

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What changes would you suggest for improving the lesson? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you!*