



Needs, Wants and Privileges 01

We all have *needs* and *wants*, and most people seek out some *privileges* (or 'exceptional wants'). Children rely on their parents to obtain their needs and wants and privileges, so parents have strong veto power, or the power to say 'no' and so exercise healthy control over their child's experiences.

Once young children can both walk and talk they ask for and try to take many, many items – some of which have to be refused. Sorting our way through the range of choices and determining what is healthy for our child to have (and what is not healthy for them to have) can be seen by both parents and children through the categories of *needs*, *wants* and *privileges*.

Implementing a system to teach children about *needs*, *wants* and *privileges* will vary from family to family because each family has different *needs*, *wants* and *privileges* (though *needs* are usually very similar).

Needs

Needs are basic human requirements, and are generally rights as well so families often include healthy food, safe shelter, education, social interaction and belonging, sanitation, affection etc in the category of *needs*, which are provided unconditionally by the parents. In addition, one of our society's goals and standards is that all people have access to facilities that will allow them to meet their basic needs (including, but not limited to, those listed above).

Wants

Wants are convenient, interesting, possibly fashionable items, or events, that are preferred but (strictly speaking) not needed. We *need* shoes but children may *want* a certain brand of sneaker, we *need* pants but children may *want* expensive jeans, etc. *Wants* may include fashionable clothes, new digital equipment, a sleepover at a friend's home, CDs, (more) access to the internet etc, etc. What one family sees as a *want* another family may see as a *privilege*, and vice versa.

Almost all parents have already learned how to satisfy their needs and obtain their wants and privileges in healthy ways that respect others, but young children are still learning how to do this successfully.

Creating success

We recommend parents make it easy for their children to succeed (and so for parents to get more of the behaviours you want your children to demonstrate, like the children helping around the home, manners, etc). This can be done by initially setting the standard for their performance at, or just below, their current performance. For example, if they are saying 'please' and 'thank you' once per day, then set the standard for success at once per day, or if they like having their bath at about 6pm, then set the time at 6pm. This way, they will succeed just by attempting a simple task, which creates the opportunity for you to encourage them and acknowledge and reward their success: this generally results in them being more motivated. ... (see over)



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Attachment 7

Children *want* many things that parents decide are not good for them: for example, a 5 year old child may *want* to try cigarette smoking, or a 7 year old may *want* to get a fast, motor driven go-kart the parents know the child cannot handle (and the parents cannot afford), so only some *wants* will be allowed by the parents. Adults and children will never get all of what they *want*, but it is common to get many of our *wants*.

Many children confuse what they *need* e.g. healthy food, with what they *want* e.g. expensive restaurant meal, or confuse the *need* for warm, safe clothing with the *want* of fashionable clothes. While *needs* are provided to the child unconditionally by the parents, *wants* are provided on two conditions: first, that the parents approve of the item or event; second, that the child has consistently demonstrated certain wanted, 'good' behaviours.

Understanding the conditional part of this process is like looking down a passage in a house or office with three doors, one after the other: the *wanted* item or event is behind the last door, and the child has to go through the first two doors first before they can go through the third door and get what they *want*.

The first door is the Approval Door: do the parents approve of the child getting what they *want*? If the parents do not approve, then the child cannot go through the Approval Door and so they cannot move down the hall, and so they will not get what they *want*.

If the parents do approve of what the child *wants*, then the child can move through the Approval Door and be one step closer to what they *want*, but then they have to go through the second door which is the Consistently Good Behaviour Door (or the Consistently Wanted Behaviour Door, or whatever term you want to use in your family). Whatever words you use, they will need to be defined so the child knows what they have to do. In your family, what is 'consistently good behaviour'? Parents need to define 'consistent' and 'good behaviour' so the child knows what they have to do.

Does being 'consistent' in your family mean behaving acceptably for, let's say, more than two weeks without incident, or more than two months without incident? For a three year old child a reasonable standard for 'consistent' may be two days or, if there are behaviour problems, the first goal may be for the child to be 'consistent' for two hours! (see Goal Setting 01.doc and Ages and Stages 01.doc). In addition, the period of time the child needs to be consistent will vary with the age of the child - one week is

Creating success (cont'd)

... then, slowly and gradually, increase the standard so the parent's expectation of performance increases a little, but only little, so the child can experience repeated successes. The new standards may be manners twice per day (instead of once), bath at 5.50pm (instead of 6pm) and so on so the child can see the new standard as achievable but will require only a little effort (see VBP Butterfly.doc) – so everyone wins.





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System for administering Needs, Wants and Privileges

<u>Needs (rights)</u>	<u>Resource</u>	<u>Wants (responsibilities)</u> Wants are allowed after children are consistently cooperative with basic home and family requirements and standards. When <u>Wants</u> have been managed acceptably by the child	<u>Privileges</u> Children earn eligibility to earn privileges by consistently managing <u>Wants</u> acceptably*. → ... the child can learn to use <u>Privileges</u> acceptably.
Basic human rights e.g. healthy food, safe shelter, access to effective education, etc			
<u>Food</u> Healthy food (food & vegetables, meat).	<u>Food</u>	<u>Frequently varied meals</u>	<u>Restaurant</u>
<u>Clothes</u> Warm, clean, protective, safe.	<u>Clothes</u>		<u>Fashion</u>
<u>Educational</u> Programs like the news, documentaries, Sesame Street, and ..? . . .	<u>TV/DVD player</u>	<u>Entertainment</u>	<u>Entertainment</u>
<u>Educational</u> Used for school, skill development, education, creative writing, etc	<u>Computer</u>	<u>Entertainment</u>	<u>Entertainment</u>
<u>Transport</u> For necessary purposes: school, shop, work,	<u>Car</u>	<u>Transport</u>	<u>Transport</u>
<u>Educational</u> Used for school, homework	<u>Internet</u>	<u>Entertainment</u>	<u>Entertainment</u> (vary a great deal with age)
<u>Touch</u> Affection, cuddles, hugs, kisses, talking, friends.	<u>Social/interaction</u>	<u>Supervised</u>	<u>Unsupervised</u> (vary a great deal with age)

* Acceptably – as defined by the parent/s.