

Understanding & Treating Selective Mutism (SM) in Teens

Earning Rewards

Contingency management systems allow teens to receive rewards for their brave behavior and should be used alongside other positive social and verbal reinforcement methods (e.g., enthusiasm, labeled praise).

In addition to typical tangible rewards (e.g., money, video game credit, food), teens can earn non-material rewards or privileges like extra screen time, a later bedtime or curfew, not having to do a chore, or quality time with friends or parents.

In order to effectively motivate and reinforce the teen, it is important that there is **consistency, collaboration, predictability**, and **follow through** within the system.

- **Consistency:** consistently monitor and label the behavior that will be rewarded
- **Collaboration:** work collaboratively with the teen to develop a (reasonable) list of rewards to ensure their input about what sorts of rewards are meaningful enough for them to work for
- **Predictability:** make sure it is clear to everyone involved how the teen will earn rewards and in what way he or she will be rewarded
- **Follow through:** provide the reward as soon as possible and only if the reward is earned (i.e., when the desired behavior [or agreed upon approximation] is demonstrated)

Charts can be used to monitor and reinforce a teen's brave, approach-oriented behavior. One way these charts are used is that the teen receives a tally or point on his or her chart each time he or she demonstrates a brave behavior (e.g., audible speech). These points or tallies are then exchanged for privileges or rewards from their list.

[Name]'s Chart		
✓	✓	✓
✓		
Note: each time the chart is filled with checks, [name] earns 1 point.		
Points (tally):		
Rewards: 5-10 points = _____		
10 + points = _____		

The teen's contingency management system should evolve over time to reflect the teen's progress, such that as the teen demonstrates success meeting his or her goals, rewards are subsequently earned for meeting increasingly challenging goals.