

Punished by Rewards?: A Conversation with Alfie Kohn

Punished by Rewards?

By Bob Kohn
Both rewards and punishments have been used by teachers either after class or even during class. But why? Are they effective? Do they have any long-term effects? In this article, I will explore the research on this topic and offer some suggestions for how to use them more effectively.

Do they work? The research is mixed. Some studies show that rewards and punishments can have short-term effects on behavior. However, many studies have found that these effects are often temporary and do not lead to long-term changes in behavior. In fact, some research suggests that rewards and punishments can have negative effects on motivation and learning.

Do they work for all students? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students than for others. For example, students who are more motivated and have higher self-esteem may be more responsive to rewards. On the other hand, students who are less motivated and have lower self-esteem may be more responsive to punishments.

Do they work for all subjects? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some subjects than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for subjects that are more concrete and have a clear right and wrong. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for subjects that are more abstract and have a more complex right and wrong.

Do they work for all ages? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some ages than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for younger children who are more concrete and have a more limited understanding of the world. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for older children who are more abstract and have a more complex understanding of the world.

Do they work for all cultures? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some cultures than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for cultures that are more individualistic and have a more emphasis on personal achievement. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for cultures that are more collectivistic and have a more emphasis on social harmony.

Do they work for all situations? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some situations than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for situations that are more structured and have a clear set of rules. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for situations that are more unstructured and have a more fluid set of rules.

Do they work for all teachers? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some teachers than for others. For example, teachers who are more authoritative and have a more emphasis on control may be more effective at using rewards and punishments. On the other hand, teachers who are more democratic and have a more emphasis on student autonomy may be less effective at using rewards and punishments.

Do they work for all students with special needs? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with special needs than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) who are more impulsive and have a more difficulty with self-control. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with learning disabilities who are more thoughtful and have a more difficulty with processing information.

Do they work for all students with emotional and behavioral problems? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with emotional and behavioral problems than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with conduct disorder who are more aggressive and have a more difficulty with following rules. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with anxiety disorder who are more fearful and have a more difficulty with taking risks.

Do they work for all students with social skills deficits? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with social skills deficits than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with social skills deficits who are more socially isolated and have a more difficulty with making friends. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with social skills deficits who are more socially integrated and have a more difficulty with maintaining relationships.

Do they work for all students with academic difficulties? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with academic difficulties than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with academic difficulties who are more unmotivated and have a more difficulty with staying on task. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with academic difficulties who are more motivated and have a more difficulty with understanding the material.

Do they work for all students with learning disabilities? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with learning disabilities than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with learning disabilities who are more concrete and have a more difficulty with abstract thinking. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with learning disabilities who are more abstract and have a more difficulty with concrete examples.

Do they work for all students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with ADHD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with ADHD who are more impulsive and have a more difficulty with self-control. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with ADHD who are more thoughtful and have a more difficulty with processing information.

Do they work for all students with oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with ODD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with ODD who are more aggressive and have a more difficulty with following rules. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with ODD who are more passive and have a more difficulty with expressing their feelings.

Do they work for all students with conduct disorder (CD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with CD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with CD who are more aggressive and have a more difficulty with following rules. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with CD who are more passive and have a more difficulty with expressing their feelings.

Do they work for all students with anxiety disorder (AD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with AD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with AD who are more fearful and have a more difficulty with taking risks. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with AD who are more confident and have a more difficulty with expressing their feelings.

Do they work for all students with depression (MDD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with MDD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with MDD who are more sad and have a more difficulty with finding pleasure in activities. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with MDD who are more happy and have a more difficulty with expressing their feelings.

Do they work for all students with bipolar disorder (BPD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with BPD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with BPD who are more impulsive and have a more difficulty with self-control. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with BPD who are more thoughtful and have a more difficulty with processing information.

Do they work for all students with schizophrenia (SCZ)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with SCZ than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with SCZ who are more disorganized and have a more difficulty with following rules. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with SCZ who are more organized and have a more difficulty with expressing their feelings.

Do they work for all students with personality disorders (PD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with PD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with PD who are more manipulative and have a more difficulty with following rules. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with PD who are more honest and have a more difficulty with expressing their feelings.

Do they work for all students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with ASD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with ASD who are more concrete and have a more difficulty with abstract thinking. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with ASD who are more abstract and have a more difficulty with concrete examples.

Do they work for all students with intellectual disability (ID)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with ID than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with ID who are more concrete and have a more difficulty with abstract thinking. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with ID who are more abstract and have a more difficulty with concrete examples.

Do they work for all students with specific learning disabilities (SLD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with SLD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with SLD who are more concrete and have a more difficulty with abstract thinking. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with SLD who are more abstract and have a more difficulty with concrete examples.

Do they work for all students with reading disabilities (RD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with RD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with RD who are more concrete and have a more difficulty with abstract thinking. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with RD who are more abstract and have a more difficulty with concrete examples.

Do they work for all students with writing disabilities (WD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with WD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with WD who are more concrete and have a more difficulty with abstract thinking. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with WD who are more abstract and have a more difficulty with concrete examples.

Do they work for all students with mathematics disabilities (MD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with MD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with MD who are more concrete and have a more difficulty with abstract thinking. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with MD who are more abstract and have a more difficulty with concrete examples.

Do they work for all students with foreign language disabilities (FLD)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with FLD than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with FLD who are more concrete and have a more difficulty with abstract thinking. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with FLD who are more abstract and have a more difficulty with concrete examples.

Do they work for all students with giftedness (G)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with G than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with G who are more motivated and have a more difficulty with staying on task. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with G who are less motivated and have a more difficulty with understanding the material.

Do they work for all students with twice-exceptional (2e)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with 2e than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with 2e who are more motivated and have a more difficulty with staying on task. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with 2e who are less motivated and have a more difficulty with understanding the material.

Do they work for all students with neurodiversity (ND)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with ND than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with ND who are more motivated and have a more difficulty with staying on task. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with ND who are less motivated and have a more difficulty with understanding the material.

Do they work for all students with neurodivergence (NV)? The research suggests that rewards and punishments may be more effective for some students with NV than for others. For example, rewards and punishments may be more effective for students with NV who are more motivated and have a more difficulty with staying on task. On the other hand, rewards and punishments may be less effective for students with NV who are less motivated and have a more difficulty with understanding the material.

