

Punished by Rewards by Alfie Kohn

P201-203 Why are grades given?

- 1- To make students perform better for fear of a bad grade or in hope of a good one
- 2- To sort students based on performance, which is useful for college admissions
- 3- To provide feedback to students

The book argues, for 200 pages, that #1 is flawed, and that grades undermine intrinsic motivation and learning. By spending so much time on #2, and spending it badly, we make it more difficult to educate. And to the extent we want to provide feedback (#3), there are better ways to do so.

Philosophical underpinnings of rewards

10-The idea of rewards and punishments comes from Skinner's Behaviorism. For Skinner, freedom is an illusion; there is no self. "Behind the practice of presenting a colorful dinosaur sticker to a first grader who stays silent on command is a theory that embodies distinct assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the possibility of choice, and what it means to be a human being.

P26 When we repeatedly promise rewards to children for acting responsibly, or to students for making an effort to learn something new, we are assuming that they could not or would not choose to act this way on their own. If the capacity for responsible action, the natural love of learning, and the desire to do good work are already part of who we are, then the tacit assumption to the contrary can be fairly described as dehumanizing.

Do they work?

36 They work best in short term

39 when rewards disappear, interest does too

41 reinforcements do not generally alter the attitudes and emotional commitments that underlie our behaviors. What they do is induce compliance, and they do it well.

42 If your objective is to help students become careful thinkers and self-directed learners, or in developing good values, then rewards and punishments are counterproductive.

45 children who are extrinsically motivated use less sophisticated learning strategies and score lower on standardized achievement tests than children who are interested in learning

47 Incentives have a detrimental effect on performance when 2 conditions are met- 1- when the task is interesting enough for subjects that the offer of incentives is superfluous; 2, when the solution to the task is open-ended enough that the steps leading to a solution are not immediately obvious

55 Rewards are not conducive to developing and maintaining the positive relationships that produce optimal learning or performance.

58- Both rewards and punishments induce a behavior pattern whereby we try to impress and curry favor with the person who hands them out.

59- Rewards do not require any attention to *the reasons* that the trouble

63- When we work for a reward, we do exactly what is necessary to get it and no more.

Rewards are the 'enemies of exploration'.

66 An important lesson is being taught. The lesson is that school is not about playing with ideas or taking intellectual risks; it is about doing what is necessary, and only what is necessary, to snag a better letter or number. Most students will quickly accommodate us.

67- Do rewards motive people? Absolutely. They motivate people to get rewards.

71- Extrinsic rewards reduce intrinsic motivation.

78- Rewards are usually experienced as controlling and we tend to recoil from situations where our autonomy has been diminished.

83- There is nothing objectionable about a teacher's throwing a popcorn party for her class; the problem is making the party contingent on students' behavior.

87- Extrinsic motivators are most dangerous when offered for something we want children to want to do.

90- Rewards offer a 'how' answer to what is really a 'why' question

91- given particular outer conditions and approaches to education, an inner world will eventually emerge which conforms to and matches it

98- Praise does not correlate with student achievement gains

104- The desire for approval is very nearly universal in young children

106- There are 2 general principles to keep in mind when dealing with praise- Self determination and intrinsic motivation.

107- It is essential that students get feedback about their academic progress and classroom conduct, it does not require praise.

Why behaviorism doesn't work in class or help children become good people

144- 3 facts: Young children don't need to be rewarded to learn. At any age, rewards are less effective than intrinsic motivation for prompting effective learning. Rewards for learning undermine intrinsic motivations.

152- It takes more time to bring students in on the process of making decisions...many teachers lack the skills to do so.

157- Compared to students who are allowed to get wrapped up in the task itself, those thinking about grades or tests don't do as well on measures of creative thinking or conceptual learning.

165- Children do not learn to be moral by learning to obey rules that others make for them.

166- Punishment doesn't even teach what not to do, much less the reason not to do it: what it really teaches is the desire to avoid punishment.

167- To the extent that helping children develop good values depends on establishing a caring relationship with them, the use of punishment makes that much less likely to happen

168- Punishment renders autonomy of conscience impossible

174- Research indicates that children whose parents believe in using rewards to motivate them are less cooperative and generous than their peers

Hooked on Learning: motivation in the classroom

198- Children do not need to be motivated. From the beginning, they are hungry to make sense out of their world.

199- It is necessary to establish the conditions that facilitate motivation, to create the right curriculum and the right school climate.

201- Grades are a subjective rating masquerading as an objective assessment

202- the destructive impact of grades is not mitigated by the addition of a comment, but comments should replace rather than supplement grades.

214- Three C's of Motivation in the classroom

1- Collaboration- collaboration should be the default, not teaching kids 'how to be alone in a crowd'

2- Content- things worth knowing. Learning shouldn't be decontextualized. Curriculum should be geared to the needs of learners- it requires an enormous amount of flexibility, a high tolerance for unpredictability, and a willingness to give up absolute control of the classroom. People learn by actively constructing knowledge. The feeling of having worked at something and mastered it, of being competent, is an essential ingredient of successful learning.

3- Choice- autonomy in the classroom.