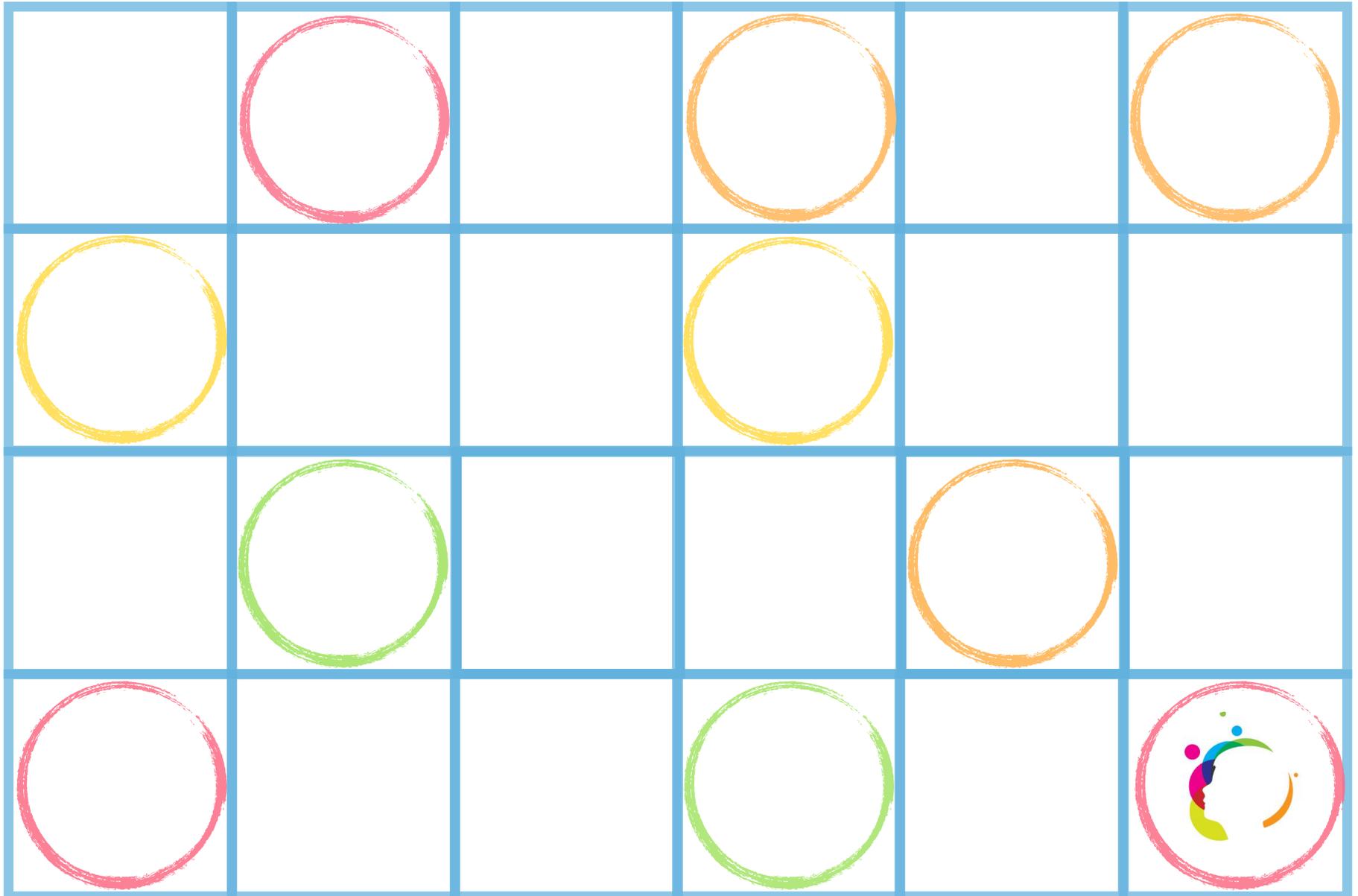


MAGIC CIRCLE CHART



IMPROVING BEHAVIOUR WITH REWARD CHARTS



Reward charts can be a parent's best friend, particularly if you've entered that tricky phase when your child develops an assertive streak and seems to do the exact opposite of what you'd like! When used properly, reward charts are a fantastic way to encourage positive behaviours in your child but there are some guidelines you should follow before you embark on a rewards program.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF REWARD CHARTS

Rewards can be a very useful positive parenting technique and there are a few ways to get the best out of them. The best rewards are those that **involve the whole family**. So when the stickers have been awarded, the whole family does something fun: pizzas and a DVD, trip to Dairy Queen, trip to the movies, Macaroni and cheese night, etc. Let your child choose what she would like to do!

Other good rewards are **activities that the child already engages** in, like extra computer time, more TV time, access to iPads, staying up late, etc.

Alternatively, for something more immediate, have a **grab bag** with small but fun items. Go to the dollar store shop and stock up on little bits and novelty items. This works best for younger children.

If none of the above work, you can try **material motivators**, such as money, pokemon cards, clothing, etc. Sometimes, these are the only things that will motivate older children. Try not to choose expensive motivators, as you do not want to set a standard that is unreasonable. Bigger ticket items can be used very sparingly, and should only be rewarded after several weeks of positive behaviours.

Be aware of the impact a reward chart is having or may have on your child. It must allow him to see that he is a success and to show others that he is a success - an empty reward chart is a sign of failure. Likewise, a reward chart where one sibling is flying ahead with stars while he is still on the starting block is not going to feel motivating, and it will feel like failure, so don't pit siblings against each other.

THE PRINCIPLES OF USING REWARD CHARTS

- Only use them from about the age of three and up, when children can begin to understand the concept.
- Keep star charts as a way of helping to change a child's behaviour and target only one or maybe two behaviours at a time so your child isn't confused and overwhelmed.
- Involve your children: talk to them calmly about how it will work and make sure they understand how they earn a sticker. Make the chart together and let them choose the reward.
- You can use a **reward menu**, where there are several rewards listed to choose from. This will prevent your child from getting bored with the same rewards.
- Make sure that you give the sticker/star **immediately**. As soon as they reach the goal, make sure they get the agreed reward as soon as possible - otherwise the child may not associate the reward with his new, better behaviour.
- Review the chart with your children to keep them actively involved in their progress and praise their successes.
- Never take stars or stickers or any other sort of reward away. Lack of rewards will be sufficient.

DECIDING ON A BEHAVIOUR TO TARGET

What is the one thing that causes you most stress? If you have a partner, discuss it together. Is it the same one? Make it **SMART**:

- **Specific:** What exactly is the issue?
- **Measurable:** What would be a good outcome?
- **Achievable:** Is that possible?
- **Realistic:** Is it realistic to expect this outcome given the way your lives are at present?
- **Timely:** When are you going to start?

USING THE MAGIC CIRCLE CHART

The Magic Circle Chart is Dr. Aubrey's favourite reinforcement chart. Your child has the opportunity to earn one sticker each day the target behaviour occurs. When a sticker lands on a circle, your child can choose a reward. The Magic Circle Chart uses an **intermittent reinforcement system**, which means that rewards are random and do not occur every day. Research has found that keeping rewards random and using them sparingly has the most impact on changing behaviour. Think slot machines!