# PEACE POWER TOOLS

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## *Youth Self-Monitoring and Self-Recognition*

### Summary:

Self-monitoring is the process of pinpointing planned actions, setting goals for the frequency of those actions, and keeping records to track frequencies. Self-monitoring can be used to increase target behaviors including giving recognition as well as many respectful behaviors like appropriate classroom behavior. (It is therefore listed under both Recognition and Respect on the PEACE POWER website, and could likely be included under the other core practices as well!) When needed, incentives are combined with self-monitoring. Youth can monitor themselves, but substantial evidence shows that it is initially important to share monitoring with a coach—a staff member or a peer, depending on circumstances. The attention and response of others can provide important social and sometimes tangible consequences, which are key in the initial stages of a self-management program. Self-recognition is a quiet (generally) activity in which youth learn to pay attention to and recognize their own successes.

### Resources Needed:

- Pad of paper or pre-printed paper to track performance (written or graphed)
- Tangible incentives (in some cases) and negative consequences (social and tangible)

It is critical to engage the child or youth as a real partner in self-management efforts. Often children want to behave well or to receive positive attention from adults, but have trouble with distractions or impulse control. In such situations, self-monitoring and self-management can be presented simply as a way to help them achieve their goals. In other cases, children may not immediately care about improving behavior, but can be engaged in the process as a means to obtaining desired incentives. In either case, what is critical is forming a "team" including adult(s) and child before initiating the process.

### Implementation Steps:

- Once youth has willingly consented to participate in self-monitoring, establish attainable goals
- Pinpoint positive acts or activities that contribute to reaching goal (and in some cases negative actions to avoid)
- Design incentives for taking positive targeted actions in collaboration with participant (which may be social, tangible, or activity consequences); should include self-recognition
- Design tracking plan in collaboration with youth
- Youth then carefully and consistently tracks performance own performance (written or graph); initially an adult also monitors the behavior, with incentives offered both for positive behavior and for accurate recording (regardless of behavior—accurate recording is a separate and critical component of self-monitoring and self-management)
- Structure an opportunity for youth to provide self-recognition—"I did really well today"
- Provide other planned positive consequence for taking positive or not taking targeted negative action according to plan; incentives are typically faded gradually over time

### Variations:

Self-recognition can also be implemented within small group discussions. Such discussions can provide opportunities for youth to learn to recognize their strengths with humility. Positive stories are also forms of self-recognition. Here, positive stories about youth or the adults that love them are listened to, watched or read stories, with an emphasis on modeling positive behavior.

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## *Rationale and Evidence Base:*

There is substantial evidence that self-monitoring can increase school achievement, social competence, health behaviors, and a wide range of other desired actions, both for typical students and for those with a wide range of disabilities (with variations, of course, see attached reference list). Increasing the level of recognition an individual or group receives for positive behaviors is linked to dramatic increases in achievement and decreases in problematic behaviors. However, research indicates that it is important to recognize targeted acts and not attributes or labels (e.g., "you are so smart" or "you are such a good boy"). One reason is because the recognition of actions can encourage continued effort, where recognition of attributes can feed egotism. Further, anxiety over possible loss of ascribed positive labels is a risk. Attention to frequency of behavior, on the other hand, does not carry those risks, and can build self-efficacy ("I can do it").

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