Reinforcement Versus Bribery

Reinforcement = anything given *AFTER* a specific behaviour occurs which results in that behaviour being *MORE LIKELY* to occur again in the future.
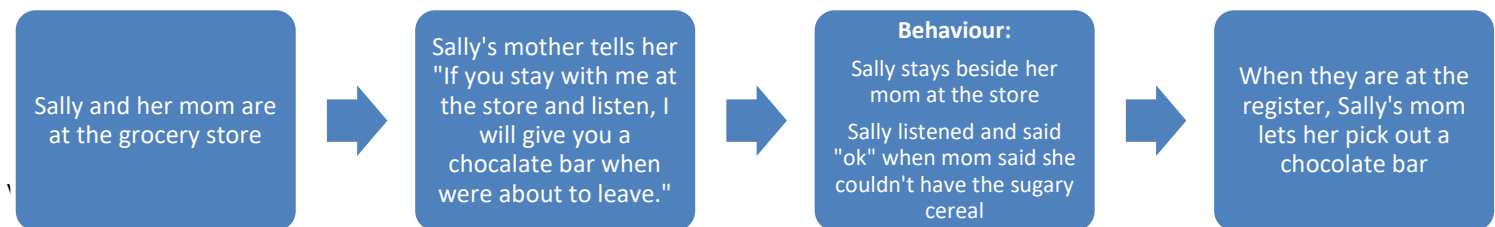
Bribery = anything given or promised *DURING* the behaviour in order to end the behaviour in the *MOMENT*.

Reinforcement is a basic element of learning. As a result, it is one of the main principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis and is incorporated into all ABA programming. Reinforcement results in the increase of skills and other behaviour. For example, you are more likely to go to work every day if you are getting paid. What is the likelihood you would keep going to work for free?

Parents and educators may have questions regarding the use of reinforcement in ABA programming. Such as: *Aren't I just bribing them to do something?*

In this way, reinforcement often gets confused with bribery. However, there are distinct differences. It is important to be aware of these differences as reinforcement has proven to result in more lasting behaviour change. See the example below:

Reinforcement

| Sally and her mom are at the grocery store | → | Sally's mother tells her "If you stay with me at the store and listen, I will give you a chocalate bar when were about to leave." | → | **Behaviour:** Sally stays beside her mom at the store Sally listened and said "ok" when mom said she couldn't have the sugary cereal | → | When they are at the register, Sally's mom lets her pick out a chocolate bar |

Bribery

| Sally and her mom are at the grocery store | → | Sally is told "no" when she asks for a sugary cereal | → | **Behaviour:** Sally begins to scream and flops to the ground | → | Sally's mom tells her "if you stop screaming and get off the floor, I will buy you a chocolate bar" | → | Sally gets up and stops crying and picks a chocolate bar |

Differences between Reinforcement & Bribery:

Reinforcement	Bribery
The reward was presented *BEFORE* the behaviour occurred	The reward was presented *AFTER* the behaviour occurred
The reward was given dependent on the desired behaviour occurring (listening and staying close)	The reward was dependent on the undesired behaviour ending (screaming and flopping on the floor)