

Family Viewing Guide

Character and Life Skills: **Fairness**

Grade Level: **3-5**

The Facts

Eurek Alert, the global source for science news, reported the following findings about fairness in the brain after looking at the striatum, or the “reward center” of the brain:

1. People appreciate fairness in much the same way as they appreciate money for themselves.
2. The brain appreciates both own reward and fairness. Both influence the activation of the striatum. This may explain why a lot of people are willing to sacrifice monetary rewards when this results in a fairer balance.
3. The activation in the striatum in response to receiving more money for themselves depends on how much that person has worked. In other words, people receive a greater pleasure when they are rewarded for the work they completed than when they are rewarded without working.

Start a Conversation with Your Kids

1. What does fairness mean to you?
2. Is life always fair? Why do you think so?
3. When have you experienced something that was unfair? How did you feel?
4. Why is it important to be fair in most situations?

Advice from the Experts

Family Share gives the following advice to parents on teaching fairness:

1. **Help children understand that complete fairness is impossible.** Teach children that few things divide equally. There will be times that they won't get the bigger piece, but they won't always walk away empty handed either.
2. **Teach fairness when the stakes aren't high.** Making a seemingly simple decision such as determining where the family will go out to eat can cause an argument among family members. Even if you know whose turn it is to choose where you eat, ask your children what they think would be fair. Then, encourage them to go off and discuss it. The ultimate choice is yours, but this allows your kids an opportunity to work out a solution. There won't always be a peaceful outcome, but it gives you a chance to teach your children about compromise.
3. **Avoid making a decision during a heated moment.** If you need to make a choice about something that has caused a disagreement among your children, delay making the decision if tempers are still hot. It's important for children to recognize that fairness is not something that is arrived at during a heated argument.
4. **Resist the urge to placate the child who doesn't get his or her way.** Parents might be tempted to make counter offers or some sort of concession to the child that feels distressed or broken-hearted after a decision is made that they didn't agree with. If you do this, your children might grow up expecting that all of life's hard knocks come with a consolation prize.