LEVEL UP
A Responsibility & Reward System

Before You Start;
A quick note before you use this pack

This pack offers a structured approach to supporting a teen's responsibilities at home, with self-care, and with the day-to-day skills of running their own life, using a fixed weekly allowance, clear deadlines, and a protected minimum, rather than day-to-day negotiation or reminders. ***It's not limited to chores***: the core list can include self-care and daily living tasks (getting up on time, taking medication), emotional regulation skills (using a coping strategy before reacting), and household contribution. It's designed for teens who tend to find starting and following through harder than remembering what to do, a pattern often associated with ADHD and other executive functioning differences. ***This tends to look different across teens and households, and works best when reviewed and adjusted over time rather than treated as fixed.***

Who it's for?

Any family can use this pack as-is. It's designed for teens aged roughly 13–17, and tends to suit teens who:

- Understand what's expected of them but find it hard to initiate or follow through consistently
- Respond better to fixed, predictable consequences than to in-the-moment negotiation
- Have some capacity for independent bonus tasks, given the right incentive

If a teen doesn't yet know how to do a task, that's a skill-building need, not a consistency one; teach it first, and only add it to the core list once it's genuinely independent (see Step 2 of the Worksheet).

Using this pack

The System Settings Card, Worksheet, and Tracker are designed to be self-explanatory; no clinical input is needed to set up and run the system week to week. If your family would benefit from extra support implementing it, this pack is also used as part of my broader work with parents navigating the fatigue and burnout that can come with sustained caregiving. This often includes families of teens with ADHD or autism, where the day-to-day load of remembering, reminding, and following up tends to fall disproportionately on the parent.

Get in touch

I'm a ***Registered Psychologist*** (Clinical Psychology Registrar) providing telehealth psychology support Australia-Wide Natalie Cullen Psychological Services. Clinical interests: chronic conditions, Autism, ADHD, parental burnout/compassion fatigue.

To get in touch, scan the QR code, visit our website (https://www.ncullenpsychologicalservices.com.au/) or call **0495 001 896**

This pack is a general psychoeducational resource and does not constitute individual clinical advice or a guarantee of outcome. This is not a crisis service; in an emergency, call emergency services (000) or Lifeline on 13 11 14.

Parent Handout

- **Your teen has a protected baseline/floor.**

  A set amount (roughly 30–40% of the weekly base) is guaranteed every week, no matter what. This isn't part of the reward system; it's a genuine minimum, not a "rarely falls below."

- **A few core responsibilities are expected. Each one earns extra currency.**

  These can be household jobs, self-care and daily-living tasks, or a regulation strategy; whatever's most relevant right now. Each completed item adds a set amount on top of the floor, tracked daily on the Tracker. Nothing is deducted beyond what's already built into the numbers; the running total simply grows more slowly on a lighter week.

- **Extra tasks are optional, but always available.**

  A standing Bonus Task Menu lets your teen earn more, any time, with no need to ask first or be reminded, and it stacks with no ceiling.

- **Watch the tally grow, then settle up together.**

  The Tracker shows a running total each day, so your teen can see the number move in real time rather than waiting until Friday to find out. Settlement day adds it up, adds any bonus earnings, and pays out- done together, not just a figure you've calculated alone.

- **Your job each week is small.**

  Spot-check a couple of items, not everything, that's the point. On settlement day, tally and pay. That's it until next week.

Why it's built this way

Teens who struggle with initiating or following through often want to do the right thing but find starting harder than remembering what to do. This is a well-documented pattern in ADHD and related executive-function differences, often described as "delay aversion": a stronger pull toward immediate feedback and more difficulty tolerating a delayed payoff. The daily running total is built specifically to address this; it gives visible, immediate feedback rather than making your teen wait a full week to see anything move.

A couple of myths worth knowing

- "A fixed allowance system just teaches my teen to do things for money." Reinforcement effects in this kind of system are task-specific; earning for a defined core list doesn't appear to broadly undermine motivation on unrelated things.
- "My teen needs to feel the sting of losing money to learn responsibility." Meta-analytic evidence on token-economy programs finds reward-based systems perform about as well as ones that also dock money for missed items, so an earn-up model isn't a softer option; it's an equally effective one, without the "already lost it, why bother" effect that pure deduction models can create partway through a bad week.

Tips

- Log bonus earnings the same day they're done; immediacy matters.
- Hold the numbers steady mid-week, even if it's tempting to adjust.
- The floor is a genuine guarantee, not a target; don't let it drift down informally.
- If core items are consistently unmet despite the system running as designed, that usually points to a mis-sorted item (a skill gap, not a motivation one); bring it to review.

Evidence: token economy and contingency management literature (applied behaviour analysis); Deci & Ryan, self-determination theory, Sonuga-Barke et al., delay aversion in ADHD; Kim et al. (2022), meta-analysis of token economy practices; Carlson, Mann & Alexander (2000), reward vs. response cost in ADHD.

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Individual Responsibilities Worksheet

For tailoring the core list to a specific teen — complete before building their Settings Card and Tracker.

Teen's name: _____

Date: _____

Completed by: _____

Step 1 — Brainstorm (don't filter yet)

List everything currently expected of this teen; across household contribution, self-care and daily living, emotional regulation, and connection (regardless of how well it's currently going).

#	Responsibility	Currently consistent? (Y/N/Sometimes)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

Step 2 — Screen each one

Screen against the three criteria that determine whether an item belongs in the core list, the bonus menu, or needs separate support first. (See notes on next page for more details on screening process)

Responsibility	Observable & simple to check? (Y/N)	Initiation difficulty, not skill gap? (Y/N)	Realistic every day? (Y/N)

Screening notes:

- "Observable in <10 sec" = N → forces full verification instead of a spot check; not a core-list candidate.
- "Initiation, not skill gap" = N → flag for skill-building support first, not a consequence.
- "Realistic every week" = N → better suited to the bonus menu.
- For emotional-regulation items, word what made the list as the strategy attempted, not the emotional outcome — same reasoning as above.

Step 3 — Finalise the core list (max 5)

Fewer, well-chosen items beat a long list. Every item earns 1 token when done — kept uniform to keep the system simple.

#	Responsibility	When (anchor point)	Value	Why this made the list /Reason Selected
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

"When" works best as a daily anchor your child already recognises — 'before dinner', 'before school', 'before bed' — rather than a clock time.

Step 4 — Route the remainder to the bonus menu

Bonus task	Est. time	Value	Notes (interest/skill alignment)

Step 5 — Quick checks before implementation

□ No more than 5 items in the core list
□ Every core item is checkable in under 10 seconds
□ None of the core items are actually skill gaps in disguise
□ Floor is confirmed as a genuine guarantee (not a target) on the Settings Card
□ Each item's weekly frequency is captured, ready for the Settings Card calculation
□ Parent has confirmed they can realistically spot-check 1–2 items per week
□ Bonus menu reflects at least some of the teen's stated interests, not just parent-convenient tasks

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Use this worksheet once per teen, and revisit at review if core items are consistently unmet despite the system running as designed — that pattern suggests a mis-sorted item (skill gap, not EF/initiation) rather than a system failure.

Step 4 — Route the remainder to the bonus menu

Pricebyapproximateeffort/time,andreflecttheteen'sowninterestswherepossible—engagement, not obligation, is the mechanism here.

Bonus job	Est. time	Pay ($)	Notes (interest/skill alignment)

Step 5 — Quick checks before implementation

- No more than 5 items in the core list
- Every core item is checkable in under 10 seconds
- None of the core items are actually skill gaps in disguise
- Floor amount set (protected minimum, ~30–40% of base) so no core item alone can zero out the allowance
- Parent has confirmed they can realistically spot-check (not fully verify) 1–2 items per week
- Bonus menu reflects at least some of the teen's stated interests, not just parent-convenient tasks

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Use this worksheet once per teen, and revisit at review if core items are consistently unmet despite the system running as designed — that pattern suggests a mis-sorted item (skill gap, not EF/initiation) rather than a system failure.

Set once, review periodically

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System Settings Card

System Start Date:	
Next Review Date:	

Base Settings

Base weekly allowance	$____ / teen
Floor % (protected minimum — 30–40% suggested)	____ %
Floor $ (= Base × Floor %)	**$____**
Earning band (= Base − Floor)	**$____**

Floor is a genuine guarantee, paid every week regardless of anything else. It is not part of the reward system — keep it mentally separate the same way the baseline works in the Jar of Wins pack.

Per-item values: copy each item from the Worksheet, then calculate

Notes for setting your numbers

- Start conservative on both the Base and the Floor %. It's easier to raise at a review than to walk back.
- Each teen gets their own Settings Card. Don't assume matching numbers across siblings with different ages or responsibility loads.
- If a teen's motivation doesn't respond well to a delayed dollar figure, consider adding a privilege-based bonus alongside money rather than raising the dollar amount further (see Flex it notes on the Worksheet).

Worked Example

Base $30, Floor 35% = $10.50, Earning band $19.50, split across 4 core items = ~$4.90/item/week. A daily item ≈ $0.70/day; a 3×/week item ≈ $1.65/instance. Round to the nearest 5 or 10 cents if handling cash.
Flex it: equal split across items is the default. If one item matters more (e.g. medication vs. bins), weight the split instead; just keep the weekly shares summing to the full Earning band.

Set once, review periodically

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System Settings Card

Weekly Rhythm

When	What happens
Daily	Teen self-marks the Tracker; running total updates same-day, including any bonus jobs done
Occasionally	Parent spot-checks 1–2 items
_____ (day), _____ (time)	Settlement — tally, add bonus earnings, pay out

Tips for implementation

- Log bonus jobs the same day they're done — immediacy matters more here than for most teens, given the evidence below on delay aversion.
- Spot-check 1–2 items, not everything — that's the design, not a shortcut.
- Hold the numbers steady mid-cycle, even when it's tempting to adjust.
- If core items are consistently unmet despite the system running as designed, that's more often a mis-sorted item (unrealistic frequency or a skill gap) than a motivation problem — bring it to review rather than raising the value.
- Keep settlement time and day as consistent as possible

Sonuga-Barke et al., delay aversion in ADHD, on the value of immediate feedback; Kim et al. (2022) meta-analysis of token economy practices, on reward-based systems performing comparably to reward-plus-response-cost; Carlson, Mann & Alexander (2000), on reward vs. response cost effects on performance and motivation in ADHD; Barkley, ADHD as a performance disorder, on unmet items reflecting initiation rather than knowledge gaps.

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Individual Responsibilities Reminder

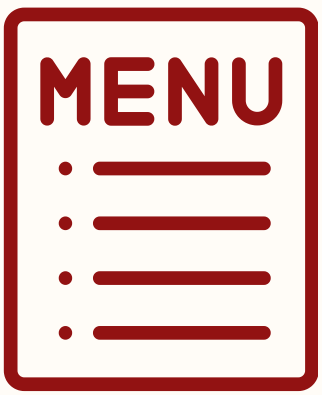
Name: _____

Task	Description
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

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Bonus Task Menu

Pick any, any time; no need to ask first

Task	Description	Value



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Bonus Task Menu

Ideas to help get started:

- Household: extra cleaning, cooking a meal, yard work
- Self-care: independently organising the week ahead, a health-related task done without reminders
- Regulation: using a coping strategy proactively before a stressful event (exam, social situation)
- Connection: helping a sibling with homework, initiating a family activity

Flex it: price by estimated effort/time, and reflect the teen's own interests where possible. Engagement, not obligation, is the mechanism here. Bonus earnings stack with no cap, so this menu is where extra motivation on a good week actually gets used, rather than capped and wasted.

Log bonus tasks the same day they're done, not retrospectively. That immediacy matters more here than for the core list, since bonus tasks are unprompted and easy to forget by settlement day if not recorded straight away.

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Individual Responsibilities Tracker

Name: _____

Task & Value	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
5.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Tick each one off as you go!
Remember, we need evidence: send a photo, leave it in place, or have a parent see it directly.

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Bonus Job Tracker

Name: _____

Bonus Job	Day Completed	Value

Remember, we need evidence: send a photo, leave it in place, or have a parent see it directly.
Flex it: if daily arithmetic feels like a chore in itself, the running total row can be dropped and settlement done weekly only instead, but for a teen who finds delay hard to tolerate, the daily figure is usually worth the extra 30 seconds.

Running Total

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
$	$	$	$	$	$	$

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Weekly Settlement Card

Add it up, pay it out

Name: _____

Week beginning: Base Allowance:

Core Responsibilities

Task	Value	Times completed	Earned
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Total Core Earned: $_____

Bonus Jobs

Bonus Job	Amount ($)

FINAL TOTAL

Total bonus earned: $_____

Base Allowance + Total Core Earned + Total Bonus Earned = **TOTAL TO PAY**

(_____) + (_____) + (_____) = (_____)

☐ PAID IN FULL

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Settlement Card

Notes for settlement day:

- Do it together, on the fixed day/time set on the Settings Card. Handing the total over is what makes it real, not just a number worked out separately.
- Nothing here should ever come out lower than the Floor. If your maths lands below it, the Floor wins; check the calculation.
- If a task was genuinely not realistic that week (illness, changed schedule), that's a review-point conversation, not something to quietly override on the settlement card itself.

Flex it: this card should match the Tracker's running total exactly by settlement day. If it doesn't, that's worth a quick check together rather than a silent adjustment, since spotting the mismatch (a missed tick, a maths slip) is part of what makes the system trustworthy.