

## The Bean Jar

A system for encouraging appropriate behavior

Most parents and caregivers want to be encouraging and positive with their children. But this can be difficult when a child is overly active or demands much attention. Positive reinforcement is the term for encouraging acts that increase the likelihood that a behavior will happen again. It is most effective when it is given immediately after a desired behavior. And it supports long-term behavior change best when it is given randomly, rather than every single time a behavior occurs.

The Bean Jar system has been quite well received and helps parents and caregivers provide encouragement quickly, cheaply, and frequently. Here is how it works.

You will need: An empty vase, jar, or clear container that can hold about a pound of dry beans

A container full of dry beans

A small scoop or spoon

Place these items where they can be easily reached by the child or children. When you wish to encourage your child, tell them what they have done that was good and deserving of a reward and then let them put a scoop of beans from the container into the bean jar.

As your child or children accumulate beans, the bean jar will become a graph of how well they have been doing.

When the bean jar is full, then choose a family oriented activity as a reward for their overall positive behavior. That activity will be a celebration of their good work. Then the jar is dumped back into the bean container and the process starts over.

In classroom settings:

We have had good results with a collective point system where the students work together to fill one vase with items and work toward a common goal of some kind of class reward such as extra recess time, extra free time, a video, etcetera. The teacher can give rewards freely to students for positive behaviors. With the child who has particular difficulty with attention, it is recommended that they be rewarded for showing good effort on tasks. Personalized statements of encouragement should accompany the reward.