

Linda Lewis Griffith, M.A.
Marriage and Family Therapist
11549 Los Osos Valley Road, #200
San Luis Obispo CA 93405

License: MFC 19473
Telephone: 805-544-9186
Fax: 805-549-9197

MARBLE JARS

Ages: 4-10

Purpose: To teach children desired behaviors; to disengage parents from unproductive patterns of relating to their children.

Materials: Two jars: one labeled “Start” and the other “Finish.”
Approximately 30 marbles.

Procedure: Select one behavior to modify. If appropriate, discuss your new strategy with your child. (ex: “Daddy and I are going to use a new program to help you stay in your bed at night.”) Start with all marbles in the “Start” jar. When the child performs desired behavior, transfer one marble to “Finish” jar. When all marbles are moved into “Finish” jar, child is awarded an appropriate treat.

Tips:

- Be specific about desired behavior.
- Work on one behavior at a time.
- Break complex behaviors into small increments.
- NEVER remove marbles once they have been earned.
- Verbalize which behavior is being rewarded. (ex: “You came the first time I called you.”)
- Reward often, especially in the beginning.
- If child is experiencing difficulty with desired behavior:
 - You may be expecting too much
 - You may not be rewarding enough
 - You may have selected an inappropriate reward

Note: The key to this technique is to let both you and your child experience success. Do not make the desired behavior so complex or the reward so distant that the child loses interest. REWARD OFTEN AND REWARD SMALL.

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Adaptations:

- 1) If the target behavior is very specific and intense (ex: not sitting in seat during dinner) use an Intensive Reward System. Set a timer for a short period of time (ex: 5 min). If child is still in his seat when the buzzer sounds, he receives a marble. If child consistently NOT in his seat at the buzzer, reduce the amount of time required (ex: 3 min), then bestow the reward when earned.
- 2) If your child is behaving well most of the time and there is no specific problem area, use a Maintenance Program. Whenever you notice positive behavior, you reward child with a marble.
- 3) If you have more than one child in your family, use a Family Marble Jar. Put marble in every time one member does something positive. You may use different colors of marbles for each child. When the jar is full, entire family celebrates together.