



USING TOKEN SYSTEMS TO TARGET BEHAVIOUR

Children with an autism spectrum disorder often do not have that natural desire to please like most children do. Nor do they see the point in doing something unless there is some form of motivation for THEM.

As teachers we need to be creative in motivating these children to work as they are unlikely to be motivated by the things that motivate other children. Rewards are KEY to any successful teaching programme. Rewards need to be highly motivating to the individual child – using a child's special interest is a fantastic reward. But remember... special interests change so too should your rewards! Rewards can wear out, so we need to change regularly and keep up the positives to keep up the motivation levels.

It is just as important to fade the frequency of rewards. A great tool to do this is a token economy system. They work much like a typical 'star chart' that many of you would use for other children. Tokens are highly VISUAL for a child with an ASD. They can see exactly what they have achieved and how much more they need to get to earn their reward.

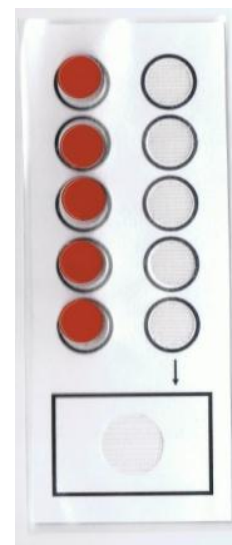
How to use a token system

Target ONE behaviour at a time. This could be no hitting, or no yelling out on the mat, or for good communication, etc.

An Example (taking from Practical Communication Programmes):

Let the child choose their reward and put it on the card in the bottom square (see below). Get some tokens (small 'tiddly winks' are great and you can purchase bags of these from \$2 shops or book shops). For every good model of communication (eg using PECS, pointing, attempting words, etc) praise the child and get him to move a token from the left side to the right side. For every bad model of communication (eg screaming, pinching, dropping to the ground) move a token back to the left side. When all of the tokens are on the right side let the child have their reward and start the system from the beginning again.

Make sure you have small achievables to begin with. Young children will have more motivation with 3-5 successes rather than 10! There are so many benefits of token systems – they are portable, easy to implement (children can pick up in half an hour with lots of quick successes!), and they are a great system for all ages – from the early years to secondary!



Recommended Resources (available online at www.suelarkey.com):

Token Cards

5 x Tokens

10 x Tokens



Practical Communication Programmes

By Jo Adkins and Sue Larkey



Teacher Assistants Big Red Book of Ideas

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans



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