

Bean Bag Chair Procedure

This was for a child with autism, intellectual disabilities, and he was labeled non-verbal. He previously had four hour tantrums per day (at a previous location) and then bit adults near him. They were restraining him using a basket hold. At this point the school was sending him home every day. The mother was a single mother and she lost her job because she got called so often.

We brought him into a clinical setting and worked on his behaviors by training his teacher, paraprofessional, parents, and daycare providers to teach a replacement behavior when he wasn't upset. We all praised this behavior when he was practicing and when he began to implement it on his own. We did not restrain him; however, we did block him from self-injurious behaviors and we padded ourselves so we did not respond if he bit, scratched or hit. Once he figured out that we did not react, he immediately stopped biting, hitting, and scratching. He had learned from his previous setting that these behaviors served as adult attention reinforcers. We gave him tons of attention for appropriate behavior and this became what he sought on a daily basis. We also never let him go home early.

- It's very important to note that we did not teach Josh this replacement behavior when he was "drunk" on emotion and we did not restrain him
- We used the PowerPoint Relationship Narrative (see PPT on tools page) of what we wanted him to do when things were going well. He watched it at home before he came to school. He watched it as soon as he got to school. He watched it at noon and again at the end of the school day. He watched it again at the daycare center. He watched again that evening at home.
 - We had 3 bean bags (all the same) in each location. After he watched the PowerPoint we went and practiced the behavior and praised him for doing so. This made it so much easier to direct him when he was drunk on emotion. He knew what he was supposed to do:
 - When Josh begins to show signs of beginning a tantrum instruct Josh to go to his beanbag chair to calm down.
 - Use a calm voice – just above a whisper
 - Show him the PECS picture of a mad person
 - Identify that Josh is feeling mad
 - Praise Josh for sitting in his bean bag to calm down when he is mad
 - Keep pointing out that he is mad and that he is calming down in his bean bag
 - If Josh gets up from the bean bag before he has calmed down he will be asked to sit back down until he is calm
 - If Josh does not sit back down give him a touch cue (soft hand on shoulder) to remind him to sit down (never with force)- we later faded this to the sign language sign for sit once he understood that sign.

- Keep praising Josh for calming down while sitting on his beanbag chair.
- Once he is calm, hand him his communication notebook so he can show you what he is upset about.
 - We introduced PEC using boardmaker pictures as these were appropriate for his level.
- Josh can use his beanbag chair anytime during the day or night. It is not meant to be a punishment, but rather a comfortable place to sit and think.
- Anytime Josh goes to the bean bag when he appears to be upset about the loss of a privilege, item, or food he should be praised for choosing to go there on his own to calm down.
- When it appears that Josh has calmed down, tell him in a calm voice that he can come back to the previous area when he feels like he's ready.

In the event that Josh still has aggressive behavior from the beanbag chair:

- Block Josh's aggressive behavior from himself or others but keep him in the bean bag without forcing him – (This is an important point- I actually have seen people almost lay on a child to keep them somewhere and we are not condoning this. We used our body as moving blockades if he tried to leave the area- without ever putting our hands on him. If he went left- we went left. If he went right- we went right. He got tired of going back and forth.)
- Keep talking to Josh in a calm voice
- Identify to Josh that he is mad. If someone else is near, have them show Josh the picture of the mad person from the PECS system
- As soon as Josh's body relaxes, tell him you are going to move away and that he needs to stay in his bean bag until he is calm- We would make the perimeter of us standing near him further away once his body relaxed.
- Be sure to praise him for relaxing his body and for staying in his bean bag to calm down
- When Josh is completely calm and has come back to the previous area compliment him for calming down by sitting in his bean bag chair (no matter how long it took him to calm down)

Josh was able to imitate this behavior in a discount store when he got upset. He sat down on the floor, rocked back and forth a few times and then reached up for his communication notebook to show us why he was upset.

