

Drabman R S, Spitalnik R & O'Leary K D. Teaching self-control to disruptive children. *J. Abnormal Psychol.* 82:10-6, 1973.
[State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY]

In a study designed to improve their behavior, disruptive children were taught to match teachers' evaluations of their behavior, using a classroom token economy. The percentage of children checked for accurate matches was gradually decreased during the course of the study until all the children received only the points they awarded themselves, regardless of how well their own evaluations compared to the teachers' evaluations. The pupils maintained the very low levels of disruptive behavior and high rates of academic output established by the token economy. [The *SCJ*® and the *SSCJ*® indicate that this paper has been cited in over 135 publications.]

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In 1971 Ken Kaufman, Dave Santogrossi, Bob Spitalnik, and I were graduate students working with K. Daniel O'Leary at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. After his classroom token-economy dissertation data were collected, Kaufman added a phase in which he had the children reward themselves.¹ They remained well-behaved during this period. Santogrossi unsuccessfully attempted to replicate this result.² Spitalnik and I thought the problem with Santogrossi's program was that the change from external reward to self-reward seemed too abrupt. We thought a successful treatment could be designed in which students were gradually shaped to self-reward.

O'Leary kindly gave us permission to use the one-way mirrored classroom in his Point of the Woods Laboratory School for an after-school token-economy reading program. It was extremely important that we work with children who had very disruptive be-

havior. Therefore, we recruited the eight worst-behaved children from special "adjustment" classes, which had been set up for children with serious behavioral problems in the local school district. It took the optimistic enthusiasm of graduate students to believe we could get the worst children in the entire school district in a room together without chaos. Some of our friends had serious concerns for our sanity when we told them we thought we could get these "monsters" to appropriately self-reward when they would have the opportunity to receive the maximum reward regardless of their behavior.

After a baseline in which our volunteer teachers, Rosalyn Silver Brody and Maria Vegega, were subjected to such high levels of disruptive behavior that, despite their best efforts, we feared they would not be able to complete the program, we began treatment. The program consisted of establishing a token economy and then teaching the children to rate their own behavior to match the teachers' ratings of their behavior. After the children learned to match the teachers' ratings, they were given the amount of points they awarded themselves unless, when checked for accuracy by the teacher, the ratings differed. We gradually decreased the percentage of children who were randomly checked until all children were receiving the amount of points they awarded themselves regardless of what they objectively deserved.

The results were that the children retained the appropriate behavior they had established during the token economy even when they were no longer being graded by their teacher. They also completed a great deal more reading work than during baseline evaluation. One of the four daily 15-minute periods was randomly selected as a (no-token) control period each day. Unlike the data from most classroom token programs prior to this study, the low levels of disruptive behavior and high levels of completed work demonstrated during the treatment periods carried over to the control period.

Since 1973, research using this method has been conducted in both classroom³ and nonclassroom⁴ situations with normal^{5,6} and retarded⁷ children. In 1974 this paper won the American Personnel and Guidance Association's Award for outstanding research. We believe this study has been cited often because it was one of the first to demonstrate the possibility of self-reward within a behavioral framework, and it is a procedure that rates very high on treatment acceptability.

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