

One Piece At A Time

Janae Harman, LPC

*Family Circle Counseling
janaeharman.fcc@gmail.com*

Purpose:

Teaching the importance of taking one thing at a time. Works well for children who become overwhelmed by a long homework assignment or even an adult who is overwhelmed by tasks and worries into the future.

Materials Needed:

Simple 50-100 piece puzzle, preferably with pieces approximately 1-inch or slightly less in size.

Procedures:

The client is given the puzzle, shown the picture that should be created from it. They are instructed that they need to put the puzzle together by picking up all the pieces and in one motion of putting it on the table put the puzzle together, all the pieces at the same time. I keep myself lighthearted, pretending this is a task that is completely reasonable and easily accomplished. They will pick up the pieces and then put them on the table squishing them or spreading them slightly with the motion. I reflect that they did not accomplish the task but that they should try again, totally encouraging. They get about three tries to do so, all the while I am excited about their ability to make this work.

Process Questions and Follow-Up:

About the same time they begin to express that this is an impossible task, I then ask them if they have a better way to put the puzzle together. Of course they say they choose a piece at a time to put together, usually starting with the edges or part of the inner picture that is easily identifiable. This leads into a discussion of the feelings they had trying to put it together all at the same time and how different it is to do one piece at a time. Usually they talk about one feeling manageable and the other impossible and discouraging. Then it is asked if that is similar to the task they are finding overwhelming and to the importance of chunking up the activity into manageable parts or taking things one at a time. I even go into how looking at the puzzle picture on the box is planning or how choosing edges first of the puzzle is planning but not trying to do it all at the same time. Planning is different than doing. This gives a concrete example of how important it is to have a goal and plan but to take the tasks one at a time so they can succeed with less frustration and discouragement.

Theoretical Rationale and/or Research Base:

Limitations:

Client must have the cognitive ability to transfer learning from one activity to another.

Practice Settings:

- ☐ College Counseling
- ☐ Counselor Education and Supervision
- ☒ Mental Health Agency/Private Practice Counseling
- ☐ Rehabilitation Counseling
- ☒ School Counseling