

## Filling the Jar

**Intended age group:** Middle school through Adult

**Time Needed:** 5 minutes

**Learning objectives:** Participants will be reminded of the need to prioritize responsibilities before pursuing fun.

**Materials needed:** A clean, empty jar; a container with enough plastic golf balls or ping pong balls to fill the jar to the top; a container with enough uncooked rice to fill the jar once the balls are inside

### Overview:

Say: “The jar represents the amount of time we have available in a day. The balls represent our responsibilities, or duties, while the rice represents the fun things we want to do. Every day we think about our priorities. Should we take care of our duties first or have fun first? Let’s say we choose to do the things we most *want* to do.” Dump all the rice in the jar. “We’ll realize that our day is mostly over. Once we begin to add the balls (responsibilities), it isn’t long before our day is full and we have not taken care of all our responsibilities.”

Dump everything back out and start over. Say: “What if we choose to take care of our responsibilities first, and *then* do the things we want to do? If we put the balls in first and then add the rice, everything fits.”

Hold up the jar that is full of balls but no rice. The class will see all the gaps in the day. It isn’t balanced this way either. We need to concentrate on accomplishing two or three responsibilities, then taking a few moments of down time (a few balls, a little rice, then a few more balls, a little more rice, etc.). Pour in the rice on top of the balls, to illustrate.

Say: “Sometimes, a lot of us tend to throw balls (responsibilities) into our day as fast and furiously as we can, and never add any rice. Don’t we all have items on our ‘to-do’ lists that never seem to get done? Those are extra balls, and often we try to cram them into the jar. We cannot fit 18 balls in a 12-ball day!”

### Suggested discussion questions:

### Classroom application:

To make the idea more concrete for younger students, have them suggest what responsibilities some of the balls could represent (e.g., doing homework, walking the dog, practicing piano) and what some of the rice could represent (e.g., playing a video game, talking on the phone, going to the movies).

This activity was adapted from *10-Minute Life Lessons for Kids*, by Jamie Miller.

