

A Story of Basic Needs

By Joyce Clark, RN

One day in kindergarten our teacher told us, “Today each of you will plant a bean. It is very important to listen to the directions. If you do everything correctly, you will have a big, beautiful bean plant.”

We were instructed to fill our cup with a half cup of dirt. Mrs. Olson helped us measure it. The next step was to put a hole in the dirt and then put a bean into the hole. Mrs. Olson helped us make the holes exactly one inch.

When we were done, we had sixteen little cups of dirt. Sixteen beans divided into the little cups. We set them beside each other on the window sill so that the sun would shine on them.

Then the “big job”, the most important job, the job that made us tremble with responsibility was next. We would water our beans each day. Mrs. Olson told us how much water to use and watched us measure and then pour it onto the dirt. And then one morning, we noticed that the dirt in our cup had broken. It was not smooth, but had a bump in it. This was so unusual after seeing the same thing so much, that we were wide-eyed. “What could it be?”

Mrs. Olson said, “Could it be that a worm got into your cups and made the dirt crack?” Some of us said “Yes”, and some of us said “No”.

Mrs. Olson said, “Do you think Mr. Johnson came into the class and did that to your dirt?” We broke up in laughter. The idea was funny. Mr. Johnson wouldn’t do anything like that. He was our janitor and our friend.

Mrs. Olson’s face was very serious when she asked, “What happened to your cups, children?” No one said a thing. We were tongue-tied. What, indeed, happened? Did we do something wrong? Did we measure wrong? Did we give it enough sunlight? We measured more water into our cups and watched it soak up into the dirt. We still didn’t know why the dirt was disturbed and Mrs. Olson didn’t tell us. We had a real mystery!

Two days later we saw the bean. A sturdy tendril poked itself out of the dirt in our cups. Some tendrils were a little bigger; some were a little lighter in color;

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some were darker, but they were all healthy.

We were all excited! We did it! All of our plants grew! Our mothers would be so proud of us! And the beans would grow bigger and bigger each day!

What does this story mean to us?

- Nurturing a bean seed – Like taking care of a baby or taking care of yourself
- Watering the soil – Like getting good nutrition and drinking enough water
- The cup – Like needing a safe home for protection and a balanced environment
- Sunlight (warmth) - Like love and belonging, trust, and supervision
- Esteem – Like caring with respect for self and others
- The different colors and sizes of plants – Like valuing our differences and fulfilling our unique potential

This story is an excellent example of taking care of something and making a safe, healthy place to grow. It also explains what you need to do for a healthy recovery.

Think of yourself as the bean in the story. Without enough resources or support, your health is at risk – You need to get help. If you meet your basic needs, you grow and thrive as a unique human being:

- Setting realistic goals for health
- Having food, water, sleep, and support
- Preparation – Treatment plan and secure place to live
- Having someone who cares, and healthy relationships
- Growing pains – There may be setbacks, but keep trying
- Healthy Recovery!

Discussion: What can you do if you don't feel nurtured or cared for?

Do you have the basics for a healthy recovery?