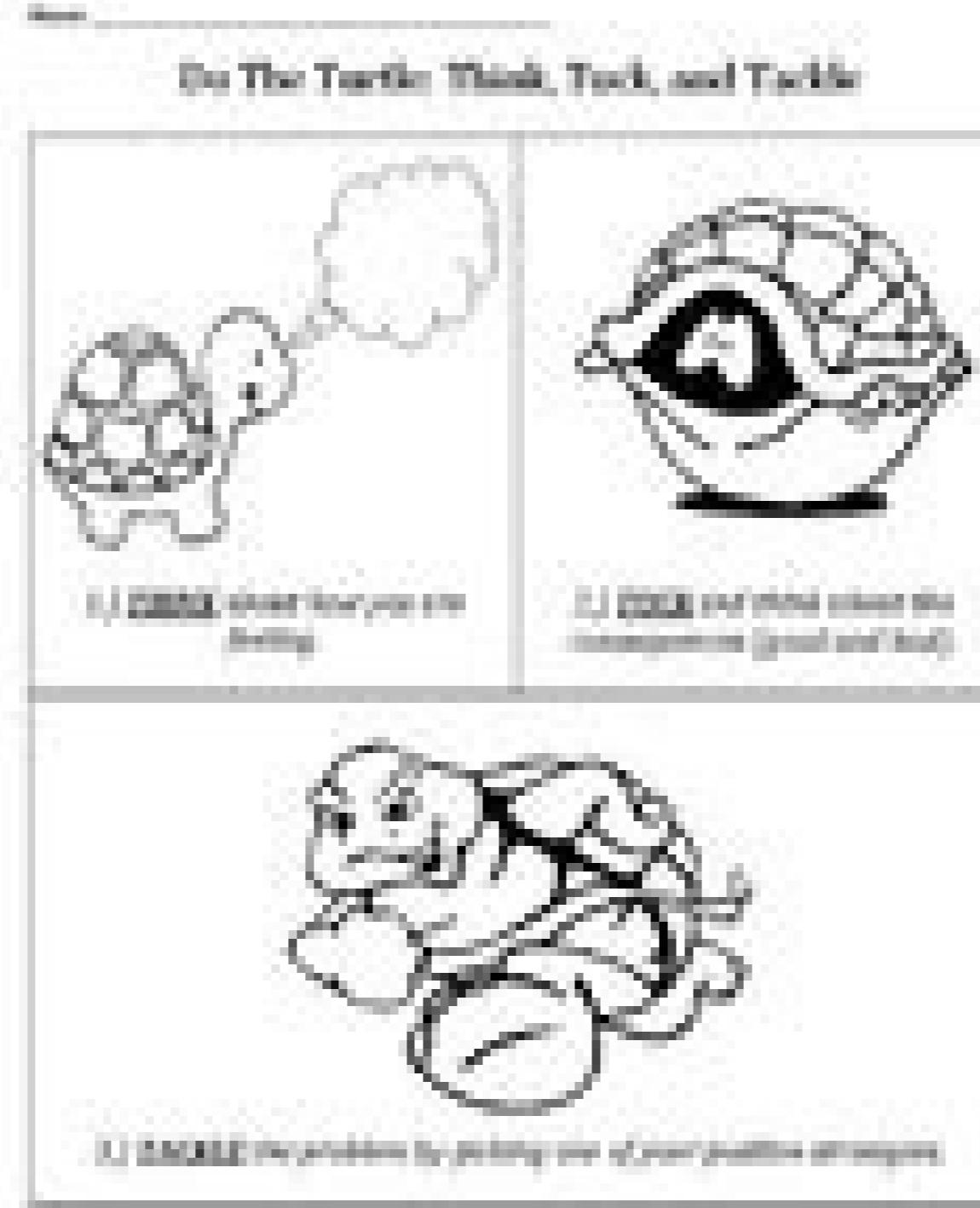
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## Impulse control worksheets for youth

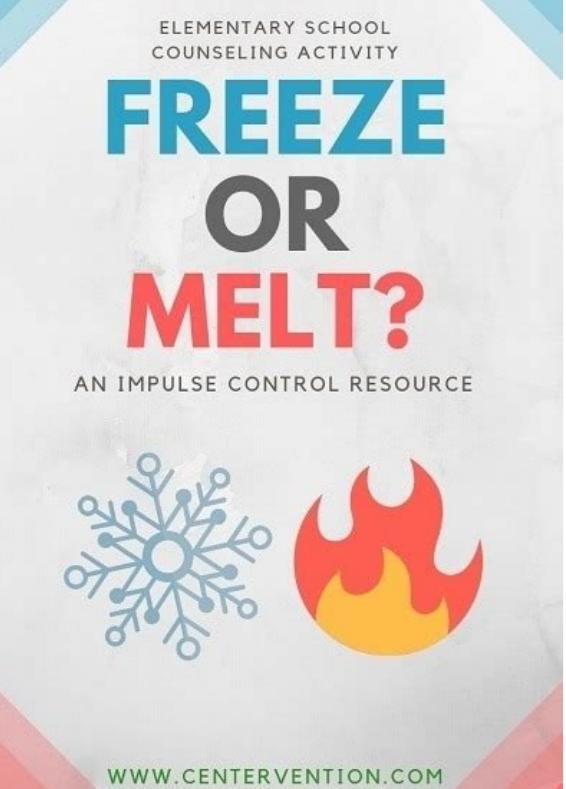
**Impulse control worksheets for youth pdf. What is impulse control in a child. Impulsive behavior impulse control worksheets for youth. How to improve a child's impulse control. Free printable impulse control worksheets for youth. What medication helps with impulse control.**



### How to teach a child impulse control.

Impulse control can be a challenge—and developmentally appropriate—for many kids, particularly little ones. However, it is a vital skill that can be nurtured and improved upon at any age. This is important as a lack of impulse control is at the root of many behavior problems. Without effective intervention, impulsive behaviors can become normalized, habitual, and worsen over time. For example, impulsive 5-year-olds may hit or have tantrums when they don't get their way, while impulsive 14-year-olds may share inappropriate content on social media or engage in risky behaviors like drinking alcohol without thinking about the potential ramifications. However, you can help your child learn to improve their impulse control as they grow. In fact, studies show that interventions to improve impulse control (and other elements of executive function) can be very helpful in bolstering these skills. Research shows that poor impulse control is linked with impaired decision-making and the development of mental health conditions. So, the more impulse control your child gains, the less likely they'll be to do or say something that can harm others and themselves—and they'll be more likely to have positive mental health. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) impacts approximately 11% of children. Impulse control, attention issues, difficulty remembering, and trouble following directions are all common symptoms of ADHD. Kids with ADHD may need extra support to develop these skills. If you think your child may have ADHD, contact their doctor for evaluation. Treatment options include medications, therapy, and structural supports. Often a variety of coping methods are used to help kids with neurodiverse brains thrive. Laura Natividad / Moment / Getty Images Kids who don't understand or know how to effectively communicate their emotions are more likely to be impulsive. A child who can't say, "I'm angry" may hint to show they're upset. Or a child who can't verbalize, "I feel sad," may throw themselves to the floor and scream. Teach your child to recognize their feelings so they can tell you—rather than show you—how they feel. Start by teaching your child how to label their emotions, such as angry, sad, excited, surprised, worried, or scared. Then, talk about the difference between feelings and behavior. Make sure they know it's okay to feel angry, but it's not okay to hit, kick, or yell at someone when they're angry. When they're able to talk about their emotions in a meaningful way, they'll be more likely to feel heard and supported—and less likely to feel the need to act out. Sometimes, kids behave impulsively because they don't listen to directions, this is particularly true of kids who have ADHD.

Help them stay on track by making sure they're actually listening. Otherwise, before you've finished your instructions, they may sprint into action without any idea what you said. Teach your child to listen to directions by asking them to repeat your instructions before taking action. Before you start your instructions, say, "Before you move, I want you to explain the directions back to me." And once you've finished, you can ask, "OK, what did I just tell you to do?" Only after they're able to repeat back what you said—whether it's to clean their room or to put away their homework—should they be able to take action. Additionally, aim to make directions simple, easy-to-follow, and with as few steps as possible. Consider your child's developmental readiness to follow multi-step directions as well. You can also try writing down directions so that they have a reference if they forget what they need to do. Although brainstorming solutions sounds simple, problem-solving can be one of the most effective impulse control techniques. Teach your child that there is more than one way to solve a problem and that it is helpful to evaluate several potential solutions before springing into action. So, whether your child is trying to fix the chain on their bicycle or trying to figure out a math problem, encourage them to brainstorm at least five possible ways to solve a problem before deciding what to do. After identifying possible solutions, help them evaluate which solution is most likely to be effective.



With practice, they can get used to thinking before they act. Low frustration tolerance may cause impulsive outbursts. Teaching your child anger management skills can help them deal with their emotions in a healthy way. Show them specific strategies, like taking a few deep breaths or walking around the house to burn off some energy. You can even create a calm-down kit filled with tools that will help them relax. It's best to teach children how to calm down, make more appropriate choices, and/or place them in a calm-down space before impulsively reacting. Create clear rules and explain the reasons behind your rules. Providing your child with structure and expectations can help improve impulse control because they know what behavior is desired from them. In fact, research shows that kids tend to thrive with the routine and structure offered by family rules. Make your expectations known before your child enters new situations. When they understand the need to use an indoor voice in the library or walk in the grocery store, they'll be less likely to misbehave. Explain the negative consequences of breaking the rules ahead of time, as well. Then, they'll be able to make better-informed decisions about their behavior. Keep your discipline consistent and your child's routine the same. Less chaos reduces impulsive behavior. Offer reminders like, "You need to hold my hand in the parking lot when we get out of the car," every time you go to the store.

## Impulse Control Activities for Teens

I'll break these activities down by life-skill. Many of these skills may seem basic to you as an adult, but your teen may need a reminder to use the new tools in their toolbox. Gentle, friendly reminders are going to help them create routines and new, positive habits. But they won't be able to do it without you. New habits can take at least 28 days to build, but they can fall apart quicker than that through sporadic use.

### 1. Emotional, Mental and Social Development

- Organized sports/activities/clubs
- Keep a journal; reflect on when you were able to exhibit impulse control, and when you were not. What did you mean to happen?
- Have your child keep a journal of consequences to help ward off peer pressure
- For teens with trouble regulating time, use a planner with hour (or even half hour) time slots. Build in times and routines for filling out the planner and referencing it

### 2. Stress-Reduction Techniques

- Take a shower
- Have a mantra or Bible passage memorized. "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13, NRSV) is a personal favorite, but a quick Google or Pinterest search will help find many more.
- Write out the things you are, and are NOT in control of.
- Practice deep breathing.
- Dance
- Play an activity
- Blowing bubbles
- Coloring
- Journaling

Make delayed gratification fun by creating a reward system. A token economy system can be a fun way to do this. Reward your child's good behavior with tokens. Then, allow them to exchange tokens for bigger rewards, like a trip to the park. Create small incentives that only require one or two tokens as well as big rewards, that require 20 tokens. Then, encourage your child to save up their tokens for bigger ticket items, like going to the movies. Saving up for bigger rewards will teach them how to wait, an essential skill that will help them resist temptations that may lead to impulsive choices. Your child will learn a lot about impulse control by watching you. Model appropriate ways to wait patiently and tolerate delayed gratification. Point out impulse control techniques that you're using by saying things like, "I'd really like to buy that new laptop but I'm going to save my money for our vacation next summer." Talking to yourself out loud will teach your child how to develop an internal dialogue that will help them manage their impulses. Researchers at the University of Toronto found that self-talk plays a major role in helping kids manage their impulsive behavior. Role model healthy self-talk by saying things like, "This is a long line but we have to wait patiently for our turn." Encourage your child to play outside and ensure that they get plenty of exercise. A child who has had an opportunity to run, jump, and climb will be better equipped to be more self-disciplined. Limit your child's screen time and encourage them to be physically active whenever possible. Look for opportunities to play outdoor games together as well. Tossing a ball, playing hopscotch, or playing tag will get direct their energy into positive actions rather than impulsive, inappropriate ones. Games such as Simon Says, Red Light Green Light, and Follow the Leader will give your child opportunities to practice impulse control. And your child will likely enjoy playing them while they learn. With practice, your child can train their brain to have better self-control. But make sure you make practice fun. If you force them to sit still or pay attention to boring tasks too long, your efforts may backfire. It's normal for young children to be physically impulsive. Hitting, jumping off furniture, or running in the grocery store are common impulse control problems. By the tween and teen years, most kids have gained control over their physical impulses but they may still be verbally impulsive. Your child may blurt things out without thinking about how their words may be perceived or may say unkind things when they're angry. With practice and consistent discipline, impulse control should improve over time. If, however, you have concerns about your child's ability to make healthy decisions or your child seems to be struggling more than other children their age, talk to their pediatrician. Underlying conditions, like ADHD, may interfere with your child's ability to manage impulsive behavior, but treatment can be a big help. 4 Write down the rules. A prerequisite to impulse control includes a knowledge of standards. These personal and assumed guidelines stand us in the "right" direction of following rules. The right-side classroom rules, society's rules, rules of common sense, personal standards, and moral guidelines. For those with sensory processing challenges, communication difficulties, executive functioning issues, these standards can be very difficult to perceive and know! It can be very stressful for the child to know exactly what they are. The impulse control strategies listed above are techniques and tips that can help kids to control themselves. While development of self-control skills happens over time and over time, the strategies for controlling impulses can be used to help kids develop self-control necessary for managing impulse control in a variety of settings. Reaching impulse control strategies to kids doesn't need to be boring or repetitive. While the number one strategy for helping kids become more aware of impulsivity in order to gain self-control is listed below, there are actually several more tools for impulse control that can help kids master their impulse control skills (at least on an age-appropriate level of expectation). Practice. This is the biggest technique for working on impulse control in kids. Because self-control is a skill that develops over time, going over (and over) those skills can make all the difference. Self regulation- We've talked about the connection between impulse control and sensory processing. The ability to inhibit an impulse can be exacerbated by emotions. Have strategies in place to self-regulate can make impulse control all the easier. There's more: When kids act impulsively in an emotional situation, but then afterwards can explain what they should have done instead, they lack the self-regulation to notice in the moment what is happening. The ability to figure out in the moment that a sense of overwhelming thoughts or feelings are building requires self-regulation skills. Mindfulness- Being aware of yourself and the world around you allows a person to focus on an awareness as opposed to emotions. Mindfulness is a strategy to improve impulse control by allowing us to control and handle our emotions as they are happening. This is a technique that takes practice (There's that p word again!) Stop and think. Teach a stop and think game to stop the action, activity, or conversation and pause to think about emotions and how the body feels.

## HABIT OF MIND:

### MANAGING IMPULSIVITY

"The cyclone derives its powers from a calm center. So does a person." Norman Vincent Peale

If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will avoid one hundred days of sorrow." Chinese proverb

"He man can think clearly when his fists are clenched." George Jean Nathan

"The immature mind hops from one thing to another; the mature mind seeks to follow through." Harry A. Overstreet

"Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together." Vincent Van Gogh

This is a way to stop and slow down to check in with themselves before impulsive actions happen. Work through distractions- Sometimes, kids become so distracted by things happening in the classroom or out in the hallway that impulsive actions happen during those distracted moments. Science has found a link between impulse control and working memory, which is an important part of focus that lacks during periods of distraction. Model good examples- Talking through examples and showing kids how to respond to common problems through modeling is one impulse control strategy that can make a big impact. By modeling and walking through a common self-control issue, kids can see exactly how to use other techniques in the moment. It's a great way to problem solve and strategize together. Make it fun! Games- Games that encourage delayed gratification or require a child to stop in the moment can be a good tool for practicing impulse control. Some examples include Red Light Green Light, Simon Says, or other turn-taking games.

Think of others- The ability to empathize plays a big part in impulse control. In fact, our ability to control our impulses and empathy are actually housed in the same part of the brain.

The thing is though, that the part of the brain with impulse control and empathy reside is the last part of the brain to fully mature. The pre-frontal cortex doesn't fully develop until our early twenties. But despite developmental considerations of development, we can promote impulse control by working on empathy. How would we feel if someone did a specific action against us? It can be helpful to ask kids specific questions that bring empathy and impulse control into light. Some questions to inspire kids to think of others when it comes to impulsivity include: How do you think a friend feels when you take a toy from them? How would you like a friend to ask to play with you? How can you ask a friend to play that would make them feel good and not bad? How would you feel if a friend took a toy that you were playing with? 6. More practice- Finally, we come back to the first strategy on the list...practice! Take the opportunity to practice all of the strategies and techniques on this list. It will make a big difference! These strategies are easy to address but can sometimes not carryover well into typical daily tasks. That's why I created The Impulse Control Journal. The Impulse Control Journal is a printable journal for kids that helps them to identify goals, assess successes, and address areas of needs. The Impulse Control Journal is a printable packet of sheets that help kids with impulse control needs. Read more about The Impulse Control Journal [HERE](#). The Impulse Control Journal has been totally revamped to include 79 pages of tools to address the habits, mindset, routines, and strategies to address impulse control in kids. More about the Impulse Control Journal: 30 Drawing Journal Pages to reflect and pinpoint individual strategies 28 Journal Lists so kids can write quick checklists regarding strengths, qualities, supports, areas of need, and insights 8 Journaling worksheets to pinpoint coping skills, feelings, emotions, and strategies that work for the individual Daily and Weekly tracking sheets for keeping track of tasks and goals Mindset, Vision, and Habit pages for helping kids make an impact. Self-evaluation sheets to self-reflect and identify when inhibition is hard and what choices look like Daily tracker pages so your child can keep track of their day Task lists to monitor chores and daily tasks so it gets done everyday Journal pages to help improve new habits Charts and guides for monitoring impulse control so your child can improve their self-confidence. Strategy journal pages to help kids use self-reflection and self-regulation so they can succeed at home and in the classroom Goal sheets for setting goals and working to meet those goals while improving persistence Tools for improving mindset to help kids create a set of coping strategies that work for their needs. This is a HUGE digital resource that you can print to use over and over again. Read more about The Impulse Control Journal [HERE](#). The impulse control journal is perfect for kids who: Grab items from other kids Lack a sense of personal boundaries Show poor self-regulation of emotions and sensory input Have difficulties with delayed gratification Struggle with carryover of impulsivity strategies into general situations Interrupt others or act out in the classroom Colleen Beck, OTR/L has been an occupational therapist since 2000, working in school-based, hand therapy, outpatient pediatrics, EI, and SNF. Colleen created The OT Toolbox to inspire therapists, teachers, and parents with easy and fun tools to help children thrive. Read her story about going from an OT making \$3/hour (after paying for kids' childcare) to a full-time OT resource creator for millions of readers. Want to collaborate? Send an email to [contact@theottoolbox.com](mailto:contact@theottoolbox.com).