

Ten Tips for Impulse Control

- Establish a verbal and visual sequence of “STOP-CALM-THINK” that is used at home/school/after-school to assist child to remember to think.



- Allow child to have “impulse or fidget” toy with them at all times so their hands are “busy” and less likely to be used to throw something, etc. Watch for signs/indicators of increasing arousal which can lead to impulsive behaviour and intercede before impulsive reaction occurs.
- Teach and encourage “self talk” so child can use internalized language for self-regulation. Many impulsive children do not have internalized language.
- Create a “self-control song”  to help with memory and internalization of rules. Here’s a simple one to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” – Stop, Think, Use your words, When you’re feeling mad, Ask your teacher for some help, Then we’ll all feel glad.
- Play Freeze/Go games such as Red light/Green light, so children can practice stopping quickly and pausing before moving. This is fun and helps them learn to adapt to sudden changes.
- Role play situations “what could happen if _____”. Some children learn by experiencing or “seeing” the consequences of their actions on others.
- Process events of impulsive behaviour. What happened? How were you feeling when you did that? How do you think the other person feels because of what you did to them? How would you feel if someone did this to you? This is not to make a child feel terrible about themselves, but to help build empathy, remorse and encourages moral development. Give them an opportunity to apologize, let go and move on.
- Do not set up situations that are impossible for impulsive children. Evaluate your expectations. Impulsive children don’t do well in china stores. Don’t take them there. It’s unfair for them.
- Impulsive children need to be taught to think. It does not come naturally to them. Thinking is abstract. You can not see it or feel it. Make “thinking” as concrete as possible. Use facial expressions, body language to show thinking. Model thinking by thinking aloud: “Hmmm. I think I need to use the bathroom before I leave the house.”
- Praise and encourage all “thinking” behaviour. “I like the way you were thinking just now. That was good thinking and it helped you keep your body in control!”