

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

“Young children can develop the ability to pause and make choices about how to act when they are more aware of their impulses.”

—Daniel Siegel M.D.

Resources Required

- Large poster or piece of paper listing the six primary emotions (happiness, sadness, anger, hurt, fear, and love) and showing the “dog faces” of each emotion (see appendix page 159)
- “Steps for Managing Impulses” (see appendix page 166)

Teacher Self-Reflection

Pay attention to any impulsive behaviors that you display during the day and try to identify the emotion you are feeling at the time. Observe your colleagues as well. When do they seem to act impulsively?

**Week 20**

Theme Week: Impulse Control and Focusing Attention

Focus of the Day: Expanding Awareness of Impulsive Behavior

Background Knowledge

Impulsive behavior is common in children. The frontal cortex, the part of the brain that gives them control over their impulses and emotions, will not fully develop until age 25. The synaptic wiring from the owl part of the brain (frontal cortex—thinking) to the dog part of the brain (limbic system—emotions) and lizard part of the brain (brain stem—safety) still needs to be developed. Meanwhile, teachers need to stand in for the frontal cortex by creating clear behavioral expectations and establishing a consistent routine within a focused, structured classroom. Besides that important groundwork, teaching students to honor their emotions and to practice impulse-control exercises will curb sudden, thoughtless behaviors.

Activity for the Day

1. **Today we are going to focus on learning to be patient and to think before we move or do things.**
2. **We all do things quickly without thinking at times. Maybe we are scared or angry and cannot keep all the emotions inside, like a can of soda that’s been shaken up and then opened. We also might do things without thinking because we are tired or bored or don’t enjoy what we are doing and just want to get it over with.**
3. **When we do things quickly without thinking, it is called impulsive behavior.**
4. **What are some examples of impulsive behavior or doing things without thinking?** (Running down the hall, grabbing something from somebody without asking, speaking out in class without raising your hand, saying something that is mean, etc.)
5. **Why should we be concerned when we do things without thinking?** (Allow students to answer.) **Yes, when you move or do something quickly without thinking, you or someone around you might get hurt or you will get in trouble for breaking a class rule.**
6. **In the last lesson, you waited three minutes to get six pieces of candy. You might have wanted to eat the three pieces right away, but you were patient and waited. What helped you to be able to wait? Did you breathe; focus on a picture, place, or word; or on your body?** (Pause for responses. Write them on the board or a piece of paper.)
7. **I have a game for you to play during school and at home. It’s actually a challenging type of game. Are you up for it? When you really want to do something—like rush to line up for lunch, or get out to the playground or the bus, or to eat your dinner—stop. Notice that you want to move or do something. Take a belly breath—name what you want to do—take another belly breath, and then see how you feel. I hope that you will feel more in control, and calm, and will be listening for what the owl has to say to you.**