

Teaching Children Self-Control

By

©Jamie Goldring

Jgoldie721@aol.com

www.teachingselfcontrol.com

Self-Control: Your first objective at home and in the classroom!
Give children the skills and strategies they need to control their impulses.

Teaching Children Self-Control is designed to teach and encourage the development of those critical skills: self-control, focus, and concentration (executive function skills) that research has repeatedly confirmed to be essential for academic success and necessary for making good judgments and choices.

I. Did You Know?

- *Mind In The Making* by Ellen Galinsky revealed that, “self-control and focus are two important skills children need to achieve their goals.”
- *Building Moral Intelligence* by Dr. Michele Borba says, “Teach children the critical virtue of self-control so they know how to handle their emotions appropriately when faced with frustrations.”
- *The National Association of School Psychologists* states, “self-control is an important skill for all children to learn.”
- John Dewey states in his pamphlet, *Experience and Education* that “the ideal aim of education is creation of the power of self-control.” “It involves the capacities to regulate oneself, to anticipate consequences, and to give up an immediate gratification to realize a long-term goal.”
- “At the *Chicago Symposium on Movement and the Brain*, the world’s leading neuroscientists agreed that teaching our children fundamental control over their own bodies is absolutely critical to their ability to control their lives.”
- Walther Mischel’s Experiment, “*The Marshmallow Test-The ability to delay gratification through self-control and self-discipline.*” His experiments revealed that, “self-control is essential.”

Research tells us that self-control improves behavior and academic performance!

II. How do we Teach Self-Control

- Self-control is learned and should be taught like any other subject.
- Curriculums should include activities that give children the opportunity to practice self-control.
- The more opportunities children are given to practice, the more competent they become at controlling their impulses: their bodies, thoughts, and actions.

III. Abstract Concepts

- It's harder for children to understand vocabulary and concepts that they cannot see or touch, such as, self-control, focus, concentration, and effective listening. It is difficult for children to form a mental image of those abstract concepts.
- Children learn to visualize those abstract concepts through a series of movement activities.
- When children use their bodies to express themselves, it gives them a better understanding of concepts and emotions.
- This approach gives children the opportunity to experience and participate in self-control.
- This stimulates children to form a mental image of self-control and a connection to this abstract concept.
- It's important that those invisible concepts are made visible to children.
- This method encourages children to control their bodies, thoughts, and actions. It encourages mental and emotional strength.

IV. What is Self-Control?

- The ability to control your own behavior.
- Mental/emotional strength: the ability to use your mental strength to control your body. Being strong enough mentally to encourage your body to respond to your emotions in a positive way (mind/body) connection.
- Stop & think before you act.
- Understanding the positive & negative consequences for what you choose to say & do. Taking responsibility for your thoughts & actions.
- Understanding your feelings, but learning to control your actions.
- Being in charge of your thoughts and your body.
- Self-control encourages the development of one's internal strength to listen attentively (to yourself as well as others) while ignoring distractions.
- Self-control is learned!

V. The Recipe for Self-Control

- Competent Language Skills
- Positive Behavior
- Body Awareness
- Focus/Concentration
- Mental/Emotional Strength
- Confidence
- Patience
- Listening
- Respect
- Empathy
- Practice

VI. The Ultimate Goal is to encourage children to:

- Manage their behavior.
- Take responsibility for their actions.
- Stop and think about the consequences for what they choose to say and do.
- Make positive choices.
- Resolve conflicts peacefully.

VII. How to Teach: TIPPS Method™

- **T**each children from the perspective of their own bodies. Children learn-while-doing.
- **I**dentify and label the concept. Summarize and describe their actions with the appropriate language. This encourages children to form a mental image and a connection to the abstract concept. For example, *“you can make your body move slowly. You are in charge of your own body. You have self-control.”*
- **P**articipate in the concept by using a “hands on” approach to learning. Give children the opportunity to experience the concept. *“I know what self-control looks like. I know what self-control feels like.”*
- **P**practice – practice means to repeat something over and over to improve your performance and skill. Provide activities on a daily basis to give children the opportunity to practice those skills that have a positive influence on learning. Practice Encourages Competence!
- **S**elf-Control! First classroom objective.

VIII. Purpose of Activities

- Give children the skills & strategies they need to control their impulses.
- Practice those skills & apply those skills outside the classroom.
- Build mental/emotional strength.
- Build a positive relationship with yourself.

IX. Activities/Skills

- Self-Control
- Personal Space
- Focus (concrete & abstract) & Visualization
- Memory
- Listening
- Paying Attention
- Mental/Emotional Strength
- Self-Talk/Positive Thoughts
- Organizing Your Thoughts

- Relax/Breathe
- Empathy
- Positive & Negative Consequences
- STAR
- Being Prepared
- Emotional Toolbox

X. Poses and Moving Balances

- Designed to enhance those skills that have a positive influence on learning, stimulate the vestibular system, increase body awareness, and improve motor control and planning through kinesthetic awareness and proprioception.
- This encourages children to coordinate their bodies and organize their thought processes to efficiently carry out their ideas.
- Children develop a better understanding of their bodies by practicing those movements.
- Self-control is encouraged through body awareness.
- Children learn they are in charge of their own bodies and that they are responsible for their actions and choices.
- The Poses and Moving Balances are designed to encourage mental, emotional, and physical strength.

XI. Summary: Self-control is learned and should be taught like any other subject!

Through practice and repetition, children internalize abstract information, such as, self-control and focus and learn to develop those concepts into meaningful and concrete ideas. They learn to transfer their ideas from images created in their imaginations into something real by producing and expressing those images into a physical form (Quiet & Still Pose). *I know what self-control looks like. I know what self-control feels like.*

When children gain experience controlling their thoughts and actions by responding to their emotions in a positive way, they begin to understand that they have the ability to control themselves and their lives. This encourages confidence: believing in yourself!

This is empowering for both children and adults when they realize that they have control over their own lives by the choices they make, understanding that their choices affect the outcome of a situation.

The key to self-control is practice, practice, practice!