

# Impulsivity in Children

Helping Children with Special Needs to Manage Impulsive Behaviors



*CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OFTEN DISPLAY IMPULSIVE BEHAVIORS THAT MAY MANIFEST AS AGGRESSION*

Children with special needs often have trouble with impulse control. Impulse control is the ability to pause, and think, before taking action. Children who cannot control their impulsivity are likely to overreact to situations. They often get into conflicts and fights with peers. These children are likely to be labeled as “problem kids”. As parents and educators of children with special needs it is vital for us to understand that these children are not trying to be mean or disrespectful. Impulsivity is a symptom of most disabilities including Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Learning and Cognitive Disabilities.

Children with mild disabilities often encounter harsh treats, punishments, and expulsion by adults. This is partly due to the fact that their disability is not explicit. Many adults do not understand the milder symptoms of children with special needs. In addition, there are many children in the classroom with an IEP who do not have an official diagnosis. Many of these children will have impulsive behaviors.

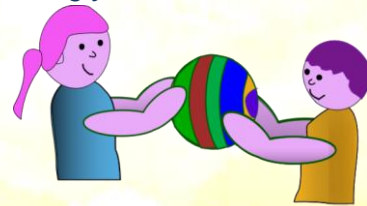
It is our responsibility as caring adults to make positive changes in the lives of our children with impulsive behaviors. Punishing, screaming and blaming will not change these behaviors. We must teach them the skills that they need to control these behaviors. If we do not intervene and teach skills then these behaviors will only grow with time.

Fortunately, there are steps that parents and teachers can take to help children to reduce impulsive behaviors. Moreover, we have to avoid being impulsive ourselves and restrain from handing out punishment procedures that are inappropriate. Inappropriate discipline procedures will only serve to increase the problem. The consequences must be carefully designed to support the child toward engaging in more appropriate behaviors.

Finally, we need to understand that the challenge we are facing is not one of lack of discipline, respect, empathy, or caring. Many of these children are very sensitive and caring. What we are facing is a matter of a skill deficit. Thus, the problem can only be solved by having the child learn new skills.

## 10 Tips for helping children to control impulsivity

- Provide Structure by having a consistent schedule*
- Teach your child relaxation techniques*
- Teach your child how to share with others*
- Have your child participate in slow-paced activities*
- Have your child sit and read books*
- Make sure that your child completes activities*
- Reduce television and video game time*
- Praise your child for showing appropriate behaviors*
- Be a role model, especially when you are frustrated*
- Consider taking your child to a Behavior Analyst*



**Teaching your child how to take turns and share with other children may help to lessen their impulsive behaviors.**

*Spanking an Impulsive Child may Lead to more Aggression*

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