

What Is Self-Control?

Tips and techniques for helping your child improve Self-Control.

What is Self-Control?

Tips and techniques for teaching your child to improve Self-Control.



What is Self-Control?

What Self-Control skills are all about, and how to tell if your child needs to improve them.

Page 2



Improving Self-Control

Tips and Strategies for Improving your child's Self-Control Skills

Page 4



Self-Control and Academics

How developing strong Self-Control skills can help you child succeed in the classroom.

Page 6



Self-Control and Digital Play

How healthy and responsible digital play can help improve Self-Control Skills

Page 8

What is Self Control?

Kids With Good Self-Control Skills:

1. Have positive, rather than negative self-images.
2. Are able to accept criticism without becoming angry or defensive.
3. Handle frustration well, without having outbursts or needing to stop what they're doing.
4. Understand the need for taking turns in game play.
5. Show appropriate caution while crossing the street or using a knife.
6. Take enough time to understand social situations before joining in.

Self-Control is a vital part of a child's social well-being, as it allows them to make good decisions by regulating their feelings, frustrations, and reactions. This thinking skill also helps children to stop themselves from engaging in inappropriate and impulsive actions and to learn how to plan out, consider, and display appropriate behaviors.

Self-Control is the thinking skill that helps children learn to control their feelings and behaviors in order to make good decisions, while aiding in reducing impulsive actions and dealing effectively with frustration. For example, a child may use Self-Control when encountering a difficult problem on a test. Rather than impulsively writing down any answer, they are able to control their anxiety and figure it out.



Self-Control is a commonly-defined executive function that is often seen as a component of how individuals manage their feelings and behavior. It is composed of two of Dawson and Guare's executive skills, those of response inhibition and self-regulation of affect. Dawson and Guare define response inhibition as "the capacity to

think before you act and the ability to resist the urge to say or do something.” Self-regulation of affect is defined as “the ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.”

As an executive function, Self-Control essentially reflects the ability to regulate behavior and emotions. It helps to reduce impulsivity and moderate emotional responses to situations. Self-Control helps children to think before they act and may be observed in children’s capacity to raise their hands before speaking in class, or stopping themselves from hitting another child when they are angry.

Self-Control skills are extremely important in social relationships and displaying appropriate

behavior in settings such as classrooms, sporting events, and in one-on-one relationships.

The LearningWorks for Kids thinking-skills assessment for Self-Control is based on the Executive Skills Questionnaire (ESQ), which measures Self-Control primarily by children’s capacity to wait their turn in activities, consider the consequences of their actions and behavior, accept criticism, and handle stress.



Kids With Underdeveloped Self-Control Skills:

1. Display anger or frustration when they need to share or wait their turn.
2. Act out in an inappropriate fashion in situations such as birthday parties or family functions.
3. Become very frustrated with academic tasks that they perceive to be difficult.
4. Have a tendency to blurt out answers to questions without raising their hands.
5. Are overly-aggressive in sports, causing their peers to not want to play with them.
6. Produce sloppy schoolwork.

Improving Self-Control



These are some general strategies and ideas for helping kids to improve their Self-Control skills.



1. Model effective strategies for dealing with anger and frustration. Your child can learn how to appropriately express their feelings by observing you “stopping” or taking a “time-out” when you begin to get frustrated.

2. Increase your child’s frustration tolerance by incrementally introducing more challenging games and activities into their Play Diet. For example, while playing basketball, ask your child to count how many lay-ups out of 10 they can make, moving back 2 feet each time to increase the difficulty of the activity.

“Take it easy when you’re angry. Demonstrate how laughter, humor, and making “light” can diffuse a difficult situation.”

3. Provide your child with verbal praise and rewards for not being impulsive and for controlling an inappropriate response. Choose 1 or 2 specific impulsive behaviors to address, such as blurting out answers or not taking turns with others.
4. Arrange for your child to play games with other children that require them to wait for their turn. A good game for young children that involves patience is Chutes and Ladders, while for older children, games such as Risk or Chess can help to improve concentration and patience.
5. Stress requires management. Learn and practice focusing techniques to manage stress. Your child may benefit by using a “mantra,” a word or phrase that he finds particularly soothing (such as “home” or “calm”), when he is feeling stressed. Simple breathing techniques can be readily acquired and used by training apps. Similarly, recounting a memory of a happier time could serve to divert his attention and prevent him from overreacting in order to regain focus.



6. Take it easy when you're angry. Demonstrate how laughter, humor, and making “light” can diffuse a difficult situation. Use humor generously, modeling making “light” of frustrating situations. While you need to be careful not to make fun of your child when he's angry, humor can work to distract, introduce new ideas into a situation, and encourage an antidote for anger. Model humor as a coping strategy for stress and a way to control or regulate emotional reactivity.



Self-Control and Academic Skills

Self-control plays a role in academics, particularly when demands increase and learning can become more frustrating.

Self-Control helps students take their time while performing tasks, allowing for planning and metacognitive skills that facilitate deeper learning.

Self-Control is an important skill for avoiding conflict and overwhelming frustration when children are doing unwanted homework.

Self-Control also helps children develop patience and take the time needed to fully invest in their school work. It helps them to not allow setbacks or complications cause aggravation or deter them from completing quality work.

Reading

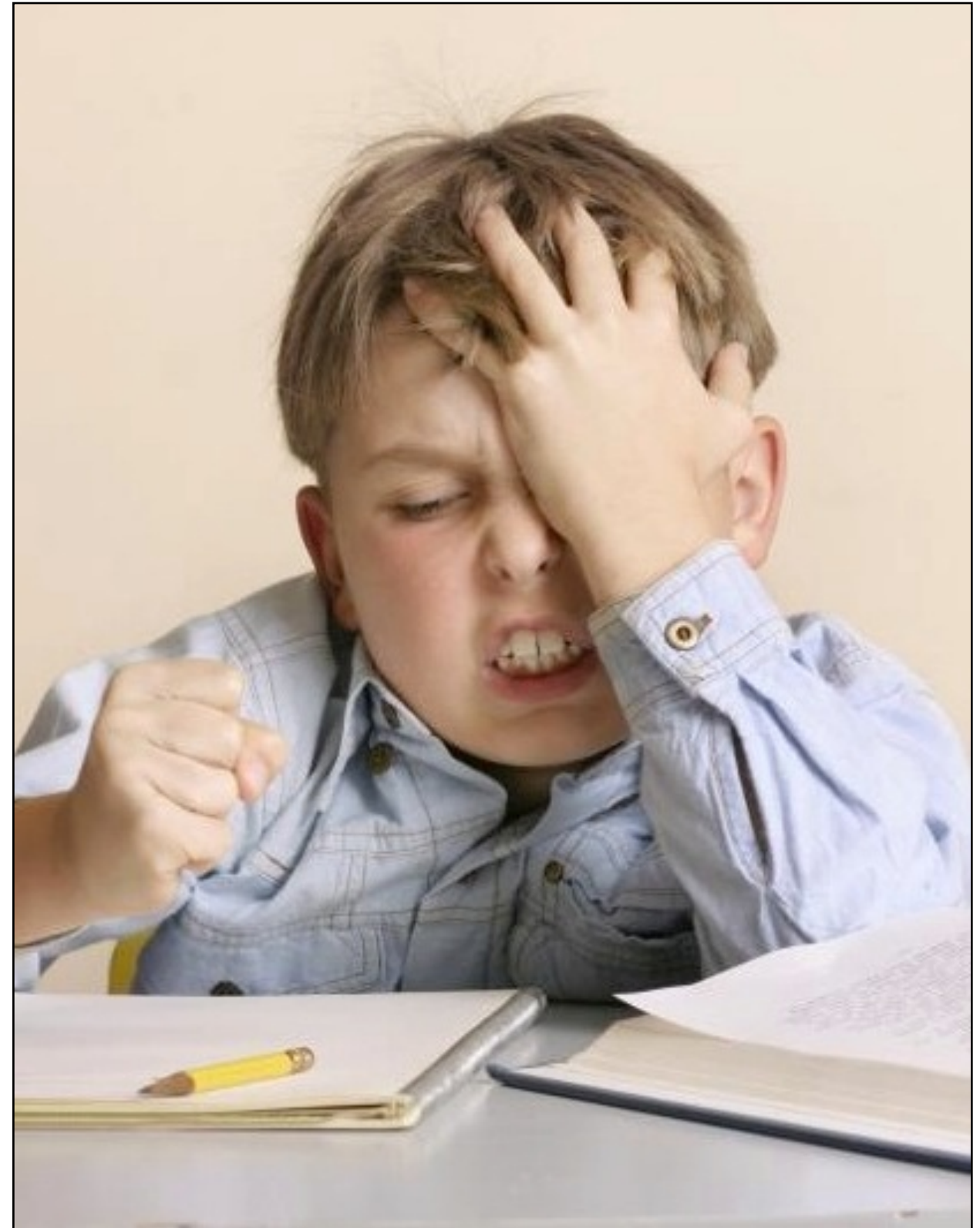
- Self-Control helps kids to slow down their reading so they can fully absorb material.
- Self-Control helps struggling learners to handle the frustration that comes with learning to read.

Writing:

- Self-Control is helpful when kids need to overcome the difficulty of getting started on writing tasks.
- Self-Control skills help kids to take the necessary time to properly prepare for writing assignments.

Math:

- Self-Control skills prevent kids from making unnecessary errors as a result of rushing through their math work.
- Self-Control aids in handling the frustration that occurs with learning new and difficult concepts.



Self-Control and Digital Play



Digital Play is filled with opportunities to improve Self-Control.

Playing video games, researching topics on the Internet, and learning how to use new apps all demand a variety of thinking skills. Proficiency with many digital tools requires the ability to apply skills such as Planning, Organization, Working Memory, or Self-Control. For children, the attraction of digital media makes games and apps an ideal teaching tool for engaging them in ways to exercise important cognitive skills and understand how they apply to the real world, both in school and at home.

Self-Control is a skill that can help kids tolerate the frustration inherent in the trial-and-error

“For children, the attraction of video games and technologies makes them an ideal teaching tool for practicing game-based skills and learning to apply them to school and daily activities.”

nature of learning new skills within video games and other interactive digital media. Handling disappointment, maintaining emotional stability, and thinking before acting facilitate success in games. While success in some games is based upon rapid hand-eye coordination, many of the most popular and complex video games require Self-Control and thoughtfulness to succeed.

Digital play can help kids improve Self-Control skills by helping them to:

- Identify parts of the game where they have to think before acting, rather than simply continuing as before.
- Take the time to learn a game's directions and mechanics, rather than simply playing and making mistakes.
- Develop the patience needed to overcome difficult, challenging segments of a game.
- Manage anger or discouragement during difficult parts of a game.



- Use their success in a game to help build a sense of positive emotion and optimism.
- Not act impulsively.
- Avoid repeating the same mistakes.
- Behave appropriately while interacting with others.
- Understand the consequences of their actions.

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