

IMPULSIVITY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Help teach the student that persons who take turns and act in a deliberate fashion are more successful than those who act impulsively. Use positive reinforcement based on the length of time the student can be successful at controlling his/her impulsive behavior. As the student demonstrates higher levels of success, gradually increase the length of time required for reinforcement.

When the student demonstrates impulsive behavior, try to use a predetermined signal, such as a hand signal or verbal cue, to remind the student to slow down and think of the consequences that may result from the anticipated impulsive behavior.

Closely monitor behavior and intervene early when a problem presents itself. This should prevent a more serious problem from developing. Close monitoring is especially important in situations that tend to trigger impulsive behavior (e.g., playground, lack of structure, etc.).

When correcting the student, focus on the specific impulsive behavior and not the global self (e.g., communicate “what you did was wrong,” and not “you’re a bad person.”)

Emphasize the impact of impulsive behavior on others.

In order to foster a feeling of success or accomplishment, **assign various additional responsibilities to the student.**

Provide assistance to the student when beginning a new task, in an attempt to reduce impulsivity. Provide clear explanations and instructions so that the student is made aware of exactly what is expected. Evaluate tasks assigned to the student to determine if they are too difficult and if the length of time to complete each task is appropriate.

Structure activities to help prevent the student from becoming overstimulated. Preview with the student what is expected in an academic or social activity.

Provide the student with decision-making criteria. For example, a) take into consideration how other persons may be affected; b) consider possible consequences; c) take into consideration different courses of action; d) thoroughly assess the specific situation; e) decide what is the best course of action for the individual student. Model these steps yourself in the classroom.

Provide visual reminders of how to avoid impulsive behavior. For example, post an index card on the student’s desk that says STOP THINK ACT.

Implement classroom lessons, such as the unit on Impulse Control in Second Step. Seek assistance from your school psychologist or counselor in teaching impulse control.

If needed, develop a contract with the student in which you specify what type of behavior is expected and what the student can expect in the way of reinforcement if the contract is honored.

Highlight peer models of impulsivity control. Seat the student near such models.

Make sure that your concerns are effectively communicated to the parents. This will allow you to share information concerning the student's progress and will allow the parents to reinforce the student's positive behaviors at home.

Additional Resources:

Impulsivity: Theory, assessment, & treatment. (1997). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

www.addhelpline.org/parent_coach_column1.htm: Helping the Impulsive Child.

www.applesforhealth.com/impulsechild1.html: What To Do With an Impulsive Child.

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