



# Exploring Leadership

## ADAPTABILITY: SELF-REGULATION & SELF-CONTROL

Self-regulation is the ability to respond to your emotions in a healthy way. Self-control means stopping and thinking before you act. These two skills go hand-in-hand and are important for handling tough situations. When stressful situations cause our emotions to run high, we need to do the following:

- Stop and think through the situation.
- Consider possible solutions.
- Assess the potential consequences of each solution.
- Take action on the best solution.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS:

Read these two quotes aloud. What do they mean to you? Which one do you agree with more—and why?

"Self-Control is strength. Right thought is mastery. Calmness is power." ~James Allen

"Self-Control – what it lies in our power to do, it lies in our power not to do." ~Aristotle

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the difference between self-regulation (managing emotions) and self-control (managing actions).
- Practice the elements of Self-Control while playing a stress-inducing game.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- One Jenga game per pair of participants

Your brain is still growing—and that's a big deal! The limbic system, which controls emotions, develops earlier than the prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain that helps you plan, think ahead, and stop impulsive actions. That's why big feelings can sometimes take over. But here's the good news: practicing self-regulation and self-control can help strengthen that thinking part of your brain so you can pause, reflect, and make better choices in tough moments.

## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

This game might seem simple—but staying calm and focused is the real challenge. Get ready to strengthen your self-control, one block at a time.

### FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Watch "[Helping Teens Learn Self-Control](#)" (4:35 minutes) before presenting.
- Games are a great way to practice self-control skills. Be purposeful about the skill you're teaching, and introduce the topic before you start the game.
- Pair up participants or split into small groups of 2-4.
- Give each group one Jenga game and have them set it up together.
- Each player takes turns removing a block from the tower and placing it on top without knocking it over.
- Tell the group that this game isn't about winning. The key is to pause, think through your move, and act with control.
- If a player knocks over the tower, the game ends. That player "loses" the round—but remind them that it's all part of learning.
- After one round, reset the tower and play again. Encourage participants to improve their focus and strategy each time.
- As they play, watch for moments of frustration or quick decisions. Use these as chances to talk about self-control.
- Bonus challenge: Between rounds, ask participants to describe one way they stayed calm or made a smart choice.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Ask the below open-ended questions to your group to engage in a discussion about what happened during the activity.

- What strategies did you use to stay calm and focused during the game?
- Who won the most rounds? What did they do differently that helped them win?
- Did you feel the urge to rush—or were you able to pause and practice self-control?
- What makes it hard to slow down and think carefully during the game?

## APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What are some real-life situations where you've had to use self-regulation to handle strong emotions like anger or disappointment? Why can that be hard?
- What are some moments where you've needed self-control to stop yourself from saying or doing something too fast? When is that most difficult?
- How do you think practicing self-regulation and self-control now could help you at school, at home, or with friends?



## CONCLUSION:

Self-regulation and self-control are just like muscles—the more you use them, the stronger they get. You face stress and frustration every day, but you don't have to let your emotions take over. When you practice pausing, thinking, and choosing the best action, you take back your power. Even asking for help is a way to stay in control. With practice, you'll handle tough moments with strength and confidence. And the more you practice, the easier it gets to stay calm when life throws challenges your way.

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## REFERENCES

- Helping Teens Learn Self-Control: [https://youtu.be/-sLWG8oseao?si=ZK7Lzc2mA\\_EHLwI6](https://youtu.be/-sLWG8oseao?si=ZK7Lzc2mA_EHLwI6) (4:35 minutes)
- Help Teens Learn to Control Emotions by Allison Gilbert <https://parentandteen.com/self-regulation/>
- Helping Teens Learn Self-Control | Angela Duckworth [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sLWG8oseao&ab\\_channel=ParentandTeen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sLWG8oseao&ab_channel=ParentandTeen)