

ADAPTABILITY: SELF-REGULATION/SELF-CONTROL

Self-regulation is the ability to respond appropriately to one's emotions. Self-control is the ability to stop and think before making decisions or taking action. The two go hand-in-hand, and they are important skills for young people to develop. When stressful situations cause our emotions to take over, 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:

"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:

- Differentiate self-regulation and self-control.
- Practice the elements of self-control while playing a stress-inducing game.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- One Jenga game per pair of participants.

Self-regulation of emotions and self-control of actions are particularly difficult executive functioning skills for young people, and there is a scientific reason for that! The limbic system in our brains, which is responsible for managing emotions, develops ahead of the prefrontal cortex, which is the area responsible for planning and suppressing urges. This is one reason why youth are prohibited from things like alcohol and tobacco use. As the prefrontal cortex develops, it's important for teens and young adults to practice self-regulation and self-control.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

- Pair up participants or divide in to small groups.
- Distribute Jenga games and have the groups/pairs set up the game.
- Each player then takes a turn removing a single block from a tower and then balancing it on top of the tower until the structure becomes so unstable that it collapses. The play who removed the last piece before the tower fell loses.

Self-regulation and self-control are a must if you want to win this game. You cannot give in to your natural urge to rush.

FACILITATOR TIP:

- Games are a great for practicing self-control skills. Be purposeful about the skills you are teaching, and introduce the topic before you start the game.
- Watch ["Helping Teens Learn Self-Control"](#) before presenting the activity.

Stop and think; consider the possibilities and potential consequences of each. Only then should you carefully remove a brick. Those who exhibit the most self-control are more likely to win.

Have the participants play a couple rounds of Jenga. Watch for and encourage use of the strategies for self-regulation and self-control.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

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

- Who won the most games?
- Did you consciously try to practice the elements of self-regulation and self-control?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to suppress the urge to hurry when you play Jenga?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What are some situations in real life when you have to exhibit self-regulation (of emotions)? Why is this difficult?
- What are some situations in real life when you have to exhibit self-control (of behavior)? When is this most difficult?



CONCLUSION:

Self-regulation and self-control are like muscles. You can't go to the gym once a month and really expect to grow stronger. You have to work the muscles often, and the same applies to controlling your emotions and actions. Sometimes self-regulation can look like reaching out to a trusted adult or friend for help. Every day you are faced with a variety of frustrating or stressful situations, but if you practice self-regulation and self-control, you will be able to overcome them better than if you let your emotions and actions run away with you.

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REFERENCES

- <https://parentandteen.com/self-regulation/>