



Exploring Leadership

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP: SELF-DISCIPLINE

Every day, we face distractions, difficulty focusing, and the temptation to procrastinate. Whether we're studying for a test, breaking a bad habit, or working on a long-term goal, self-discipline is key. Success in these areas depends on more than just willpower—it's about consistently exercising self-discipline to stay focused and push through challenges.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

Watch the "[Marshmallow Test](#)" video (3:27 minutes). Then discuss: Would you be able to wait? What if you knew you'd get more later? Would that same decision apply to other rewards?

Self-discipline has a greater impact on success than talent alone. Studies show that self-discipline is linked to better academic results and healthier lifestyles. As you develop more self-discipline, you're more likely to make choices that lead to career satisfaction, financial success, and personal well-being. It also helps reduce risky behaviors and supports long-term goals.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the behaviors that show self-discipline.
- Practice self-discipline.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Computer, projector, and internet access
- YouTube video [The Marshmallow Test by Igniter Media](#) (3:27 minutes)

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

Body Part Mix Up - This is a fun twist on the children's song "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes." You'll practice self-discipline by following unexpected rules—can you stay focused and get it right?

FACILITATOR TIPS:

- If the video isn't available, describe the marshmallow experiment and use a different incentive the group agrees on (e.g., a favorite snack or reward).
- If you are not familiar with the children's song "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," search for it online and watch it before the lesson.

- Assign a leader who will call out body parts and perform the motions with the group.
- Start with one round of the classic "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" song.
- After the first round, change one rule: When "head" is called, touch your toes instead, and vice versa. This will require you to stop and think—demonstrating self-discipline. For example, if the leader calls "knees, head, elbow," you should touch your knees, TOES, and elbow.
- Switch leaders and add a new rule. For instance, when "ears" are called, touch your nose instead, and vice versa. Make sure to use body parts appropriate for all ages.
- Continue rotating leaders and changing rules until everyone is confused. Then, perform your new version of "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes."



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Why was it difficult to touch your toes when the leader said “head”? What automatic reactions did you need to overcome to follow the new rule?
- How did your self-discipline compare to others in the group? Did you find it easier or harder to stay focused?
- As the leader, what was the hardest part of this activity, and why?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What is one area of your life where self-discipline is especially challenging for you?
- How can developing strong self-discipline help you achieve your goals in the future?
- How could practicing self-discipline today help you with bigger challenges in the future?



CONCLUSION:

While this activity focused on impulse control, it’s just one example of the broader life skill of self-discipline. Mastering self-discipline takes time, but it is one of the most powerful tools you can develop. It empowers you to make good choices, stick to your goals, and face challenges with resilience. By practicing self-discipline, you create opportunities for personal growth, success, and fulfillment. The more you invest in this skill, the more you’ll see its benefits unfold in every area of your life.

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REFERENCES

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- 10 Fun Self Control Games: <https://www.yourtherapysource.com/blog/2017/05/16/games-practice-self-regulation-skills/>
- Consulting.com: <https://www.consulting.com/>
- The Marshmallow Test by Igniter Media: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ (3:27 minutes)
- Stanford Marshmallow Experiment via Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_marshmallow_experiment