

# Self-Control

Throughout our lives, we must all exercise self-control to resist temptation, to follow directions, and, ultimately, to stay safe and be successful. In the past, we may have expected children to use their self-control without understanding what it is. We are now learning that we have to teach students what self-control is and ways to control themselves throughout their lives. Through self-control, children discover that they are in charge of what they do and what they say.

Why should we use self-control? Self-control is a life skill that we all need to define, practice, use, and internalize. We use self-control because it makes us feel good about ourselves. Rather than giving children external rewards for using their self-control, make it known that they are using their self-control to make themselves feel good. Help students who are having problems using their self-control by noticing and praising the times they do use self-control and by helping them get their self-control back through Self-Control Time, a specific technique described in Lesson 4.\*

Although it is ultimately up to each student to use his or her self-control, we must provide positive reminders that it takes self-control to participate in many daily activities. Some examples of situations requiring self-control include the following:

- ▶ Raising your hand to wait your turn to speak
- ▶ Staying focused on your work
- ▶ Keeping your hands to yourself
- ▶ Walking quietly in the hallway
- ▶ Playing by the rules in gym class
- ▶ Cleaning your room
- ▶ Telling the truth
- ▶ Trying your best

## Daily Guidelines for Self-Control

- ▶ Provide positive reminders that students must use their self-control.
- ▶ Convey the message that using their self-control makes people feel proud of themselves.

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- ▶ Help students who are having problems using their self-control by noticing and praising them when they do.
- ▶ Use Self-Control Time to help individual students who need to get their self-control back.
- ▶ Use Self-Control Time to help the entire class refocus and regain their self-control.

# Introducing Self-Control

**OBJECTIVE** Students will define and experience the skill of Self-Control.

- MATERIALS**
- ▶ Self-Control poster (Appendix C)
  - ▶ A drum (or another musical instrument)
  - ▶ *For the first-grade extension:* Crayons or markers, drawing paper

**PROCEDURE** *Before teaching this lesson, hang the Self-Control poster in a prominent location in your classroom. Leave the poster up for future reference.*

**STEP 1 — Introduce the skill of Self-Control.**

Referring to the poster, read the parts of the Self-Control skill to your class.

***Self-Control***

Self-control is when I am in charge of what I do and what I say.

I use my self-control to listen and follow directions.

Using self-control helps me not do things that may be harmful to myself and others.

Self-control helps me stay safe, be successful, and create peace.

**STEP 2 — Give an example of how you, as an adult, use the skill of Self-Control.**

For example, you might say that instead of yelling at your kids when you are irritated, you try to talk calmly to them.

**STEP 3 — Give examples of ways students can use the skill of Self-Control at home, at school, and in the community.**

Explain that it takes self-control to listen and follow directions and to follow the Pledge for Peace. For example:

**Home:** Treating your brother or sister the way you'd like to be treated

**School:** Waiting to give an answer when the teacher asks you a question

**Community:** Recycling your cans instead of putting them in the trash

Ask students to describe additional situations in which they have (or have not) used their self-control.

**STEP 4 — Discuss the idea that students are responsible for their own self-control.**

Share the following thoughts:

Suppose a teacher has given a direction for all students to use their listening and try their best not to talk. A person next to you taps you on the shoulder and starts talking to you. If you talk back, who made you lose your self-control?

Discuss the fact that it is up to the students to use their self-control, even if someone else is bothering them.

Ask questions such as the following:

- ▶ Who makes you talk? Who makes you raise your hand?
- ▶ Whose responsibility is it to use self-control?

**STEP 5 — Have students experience the skill of Self-Control by playing a game.**

***Who Made You Move?***

*Purpose of the game*

In this game, students will use their self-control to move their bodies only when they hear the drum (or other musical instrument). When the drum stops, students must use their self-control to stop moving. Students will understand that it is up to them to control their bodies.

*How to play*

First, allow the students to hear and see the drum. Choose a body part that the students will shake (hands, shoulders, elbows, knees, and so on). Tell the group that when they hear the sound, they should shake the body part chosen. When the sound stops, the students must use their self-control to stop moving and remain still until they hear the sound again.

The speed of the game can be varied. The body part that students are shaking can be varied as well. When telling students to use a different part of the body, remind them they are using self-control to listen to your directions.

After the game is over, you can discuss the following ideas:

- ▶ Who made you move? Was it me, the instrument, or you? (*you*) That is called self-control. It is up to you to use your self-control.
- ▶ Who makes you call out or raise your hand when you have something to say? (*you do*) It takes self-control to raise your hand and wait to speak.
- ▶ If someone is bothering you, and you call the person a mean name, who makes you call that person the name? (*you do*) It is up to you to use your self-control to treat others the way you would like to be treated.

**STEP 6 — Do the Using Self-Control activity.**

Have students turn to page 24 in their Student Manuals (Using Self-Control). Instruct them to draw a line between the people who are not using their self-control and the people who are. Briefly discuss why the students responded the way they did.

*First-grade extension: Ask students to come up with other situations and draw another set of examples on a separate page.*

## Reinforcing Self-Control

**OBJECTIVE** Students will further explore the skill of Self-Control and apply it to their lives.

- MATERIALS**
- ▶ Red and green construction paper (a small square of each color for every student)
  - ▶ Copies of the I Control Myself activity (page 80)
  - ▶ Crayons or markers

### PROCEDURE

**STEP 1** — **Review what the class learned about the skill of Self-Control in the previous lesson.**

Referring to the Self-Control poster, review the skill. Discuss the idea that everyone, whether adult or child, must use this skill to be successful at home, at school, and in the community.

Ask students what they learned from the game in the previous lesson (Who Made You Move?).

**STEP 2** — **Encourage students to experience the skill of Self-Control by playing the following game.**

#### *Walk Away with Self-Control*

##### *Purpose of the game*

When given the example of a situation in which one student is calling another student names, the class will describe responses that the student being teased might make. They will distinguish between responses that do show self-control and responses that don't by holding up a red or green construction-paper card.

### *How to play*

Explain that you will be playing a game to show how students can use their self-control and what happens when they don't. Give each student a red square and a green square of construction paper.

Read the following situation aloud:

Tim and Rashida are playing on the swing set during recess. When no adults are around, Tim begins to make fun of Rashida by calling her names. Rashida does not know what to do. What could she do?

Ask students to think of answers to the question. Explain that if a student volunteers an answer that uses self-control, the student's classmates hold up the green card. If a student gives an answer that does not show self-control, the student's classmates hold up the red card. If a response does not show self-control, discuss what the result of that response is likely to be.

After the game is over, you can ask the following questions:

- ▶ Are kids like Tim—who call people names, push, and fight—using their self-control?
- ▶ How many people does it take to fight? (*more than one*)
- ▶ What did Rashida do that showed she was using her self-control? (*walking away, telling an adult, and so forth*)
- ▶ How can using your self-control help you create peace in your life?
- ▶ Who should you be proud of when you use your self-control?

### **STEP 3 — Do the I Control Myself activity.**

Have students turn to page 25 in their Student Manuals and discuss the ways in which the children in the three situations pictured are using their self-control. Let students know that the fourth example has a question mark because they will need to draw a picture of their own self-control situation.

Give each student a copy of the I Control Myself activity, and distribute the crayons or markers. Encourage students to draw a picture of a time when they used their self-control.

After students have finished, ask for volunteers to share their drawings with the class. If you wish, post the drawings on a bulletin board or the classroom wall.