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ERASMUS+ KA220- YOU – Cooperation partnerships in youth.
“CURIE – Changes for youth education in relationship management with Emotional Intelligence” - 2023-1-IT03-KA220-YOU-000160281

SKILL 9: IMPULSE CONTROL

Theoretical concept:

Impulsivity is defined as the tendency to act quickly and without adequate reflection, often without considering the consequences of actions (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). It is a multidimensional trait related to behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects. According to Barratt (1994), impulsivity comprises three main dimensions:

- Motor impulsivity: Tendency to act without thinking.
- Lack of planning: Inability to anticipate and evaluate future consequences.
- Sensation seeking: Inclination toward novel or risky experiences.

Impulse control is the ability to manage and regulate immediate impulses or desires, postponing short-term gratification in favor of long-term benefits. It is a crucial skill for self-regulation and effective functioning in various aspects of life, including personal, social, and professional domains.





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Factors influencing impulsivity control:

- **Biological Factors:** Research in neuroscience has identified that the prefrontal cortex plays a key role in impulse control (Chambers et al., 2009). Insufficient development or dysfunction in this area can hinder behavioral regulation.
- **Psychological and Environmental Factors:** Factors such as stress, lack of emotional regulation strategies, and a disorganized environment can exacerbate impulsivity.

Types of Impulse Control:

Emotional Control: The ability to manage intense emotions such as anger, sadness, or frustration without reacting impulsively.

- Example: Staying calm during a discussion instead of yelling or insulting.

Cognitive Control: The ability to regulate thoughts and distractions, focusing on important tasks and avoiding impulsive thinking.

Example: Concentrating on work despite the temptation to check social media.

Behavioral Control: The ability to regulate impulsive actions, resisting the temptation to engage in harmful or inappropriate behaviors.

- Example: Avoiding unhealthy foods while on a diet.

Social Control: The ability to adjust behavior according to social norms, resisting the temptation to act inappropriately in social contexts.





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- Example: Not interrupting someone who is speaking, despite feeling a strong urge to do so.

Techniques to Improve Impulse Control:

Developing impulse control is essential for a balanced and successful life. Using various techniques and strategies can enhance this skill, leading to better emotional, cognitive, and behavioral self-regulation. Practicing these techniques regularly can result in a greater ability to handle challenging situations and make more rational and beneficial long-term decisions.

- **Breathing Technique:** When you feel a strong impulse, practice the 4-7-8 breathing method (inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds).
- **Count to 10:** Whenever you feel a strong urge to act impulsively, stop and slowly count to 10.
- **Cognitive Reevaluation:** Reassess the situation and consider the long-term consequences of impulsive actions. Ask yourself: "How will I feel about this tomorrow? How will this affect my long-term goals?"
- Emotional regulation techniques described earlier can also be used.

The prefrontal cortex, responsible for inhibitory control, is key to managing impulses. In impulsive individuals, this area may be less active, making self-regulation more challenging (Barkley, 1997).





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Practical Activity:

Effective Exercise: Think of a recent situation where you acted impulsively. (It can be something small, like responding quickly to someone, or something more significant, like making an important decision without reflection).

Answer the following questions:

1. What happened? Briefly describe the context and what triggered your reaction.
2. What emotion did you feel at that moment? Identify whether it was anger, frustration, fear, joy, etc.
3. What did you do? Write down the impulsive action you took.
4. What was the outcome? Reflect on whether it had positive or negative consequences.

Reflect on an alternative:

1. What could you have done differently to better manage the situation?
2. What technique or tool could you have used (e.g., pausing, counting to 10, practicing mindfulness)?

Practical Example:

Situation: Your coworker made a mistake that affected you, and you reacted by raising your voice at that moment.

Emotion: Frustration and anger.



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Impulsive Action: Criticized your coworker in front of others.

Consequences: Created tension in the environment and felt guilt afterward.

Alternative: You could have taken a deep breath, waited until you were calmer, and spoken privately to explain how the mistake affected you.

Resources:

- The secret to self-control | Jonathan Bricker | TEDxRainier <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTb3d5cjSFI>

- 5 self-control techniques

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uT4Aco1Pd4M&t=39s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esAUQW8w1Ww>

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