

How to Teach Your Child Self-Control

The preschooler who whines, the 7-year-old who talks incessantly, the 10-year-old who verbally jabs his brother, and the 14-year-old who can't get out of bed in the morning all have one thing in common. They lack self-control. Self-control is the ability to limit behavior rather than give in to present desires. It means that you consider a future benefit more important than your present impulse.

One of the primary character qualities preschool children need to learn is self-control. Bed times, cleaning up messes, following instructions, and learning to not interrupt are just a few ways they begin to learn it. But self-control is an important character quality for anyone, adult or child. Most of us wish we could have more of it in our own lives.

We All Would Benefit From More Self Control

Whether you're trying to have a daily quiet time, exercise regularly, or cut down on sugar, self-control becomes a determining factor in your success. Self-control helps a person say no to temptation and choose the right course of action in difficult situations. It helps people take a stand for righteousness instead of getting sucked into doing something they shouldn't do.

Proverbs 25:28 describes it well: "He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls." Self-control enables people to organize themselves and others, think before they act, save money and time, and make right choices even when unwise opportunities look attractive.

One dad explained self-control to his son this way, "It's irritating when you interrupt me while I'm talking. It's as if you poke me with your finger over and over again. I love you

and I try to overlook it but I'm starting to get bruised. As you develop self-control you'll be able to give up the desire to just talk whenever you want so that instead you can love me and care for our relationship. That's what self-control means: choosing to stop yourself and be more sensitive to others."

Self-Control in Practical Terms

Self-control puts off present benefits for future rewards. When kids learn to wait, for example, instead of pushing for what they want immediately, then they start to grow in this important area of the heart. You might require your preschooler to wait five minutes before getting that snack, or you might teach your 7-year-old to not talk for a few minutes. Developing specific strategies with kids to learn to look forward to future benefits can provide them helpful patterns of thinking now when the temptation to demand gets intense.

Work on self-control with your children now and you'll give them a valuable character quality they'll be able to use for the rest of their lives.

*This parenting tip comes from the book, **Good and Angry: Exchanging Frustration for Character in You and Your Kids**. Click on the link to order it now from our web store in paperback or get the eBook from Amazon or other online retail outlets.*