

WEEK 6

CONTENT



INTRODUCE IMPULSIVITY AND GOALS FOR THIS MODULE

5-10 MINUTES

- **Briefly describe impulsive behaviors.** “Impulsive” means rash, quick, or hasty. An impulsive decision is one made very quickly, with little time given to consider the possible outcomes of that decision. (Examples: driving decisions made during road rage incidents, violent behaviors that occur during heated arguments, quick decisions made about financial matters...generally any decision made in “the heat of the moment” without stopping and thinking of the potential consequences, good or bad.).
- **Ask how TBI can affect impulsivity.** Facilitator should distribute “What Is Impulsivity After Brain Injury?” Handout (found in handouts section, see below). TBI can make it more difficult to resist giving in to impulsive thoughts and urges, particularly if the injury occurred to a part of your brain responsible for helping you to control those impulses. Brain injury can sometimes cause changes in your personality. Damage to specific areas of the brain, including the frontal lobe (which controls executive function) can impair impulse control.
- **Importantly, having a TBI does not mean that you are exempt from making responsible, well-thought-out decisions.** A brain that has been injured can be retrained, and so with practice, you will be able to learn to better control your impulses. The better you learn to control your impulses, the more likely you are to avoid unwanted personal and legal consequences in the future.
- **Discuss what the roles of executive functions are.** Executive Functions are a set of mental skills that help you get things done. These skills are controlled by an area of the brain called the frontal lobe. Executive function helps you: Manage time, pay attention, control behavior, and use humor.

- What are other factors that might make managing your impulses (or have made things) more difficult after your TBI?

If not brought up, prompt participants about:

- Substance abuse
- Environmental factors (noise, crowds, lighting, etc.)
- Person-centered situational factors (time of day, lack of sleep, hunger, etc.)
- Feel free to elaborate on other factors that the group may have identified individually or in previous groups.



IDENTIFICATION OF FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO IMPULSIVITY, AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPULSE CONTROL

5-10 MINUTES

Now that we have identified what impulsivity is and what it looks like to each of you, can you think of a time when your impulsivity may have affected your decision-making?

- Does anyone want to volunteer a situation?

Discuss these, and ask these follow up questions:

- What was the outcome of these situations?
- What factors may have contributed to the impulsivity in these scenarios?
 - How can identifying these factors be done in both here and in the community?
 - What do you think may have contributed to you not being able to stop-and-think before acting?

Now let's review some strategies for managing impulsivity.

Facilitator should draw attention to handout previously distributed. This document outlines some examples of impulsive behaviors, and some important strategies for managing impulsivity. (Facilitator may want to read the strategies aloud for the benefit of the group.)

This handout includes many examples of what impulsive behavior can look like.

- Do you recognize any of these behaviors in your own life? Ask participants to share specific examples, if they are comfortable doing so.
- Do you have any examples of a time that you were able to curb an impulse before it got the better of you?
- What strategies did you use in that instance to help you be successful at controlling your impulses?

BREAK

5 MINUTES

Now we are going to take a five-minute break. During this break, we are going to practice a visualization stress management technique that you can use when you are feeling angry or stressed. Facilitator should read aloud:

Close your eyes and imagine that it is a warm spring day. You have gone on a hike and have stopped to relax in a beautiful spot next to a small stream. You are sitting on the soft grass next to the stream. It is a perfect day and the sounds of nature are all around you. You feel safe and at peace. You hear birds chirping, the stream bubbling, and feel a slight breeze blowing across your face. Take a moment, and take three deep breaths, in and out. Focus your mind on the sound of the stream, and on the sounds of the birds. Pay attention to how the breeze feels on your skin. Focus on the feel of your breath as it moves into your chest, and out again. Imagine the sun warming you as you sit next to the stream. Imagine that you can hear the stream gently moving past. Take five deep breaths slowly, in and out. When you are ready, imagine that you are getting up to walk away from the stream, and are leaving your worries and anxiety behind you. When you feel ready, take one more deep breath, open your eyes and come back to the room.