

WEEK 6

IMPULSIVITY: WHY IS STOPPING AND THINKING IMPORTANT?

*Make sure you take time to acquaint yourself with this curriculum, so you can be as engaged, energetic, and confident as possible when working with the kids!

GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

This treatment module contains information to allow the participants to better understand how their brain injury is related to impulsivity issues.

The primary goals of this week are to:

- Bring awareness to the consequences of impulsive behaviors
- Identify various situations where participants are at increased risk of behaving impulsively
- Provide psychoeducation on how impulsivity is related to brain injuries
- Practice skills for managing impulsivity
- Practice skills outside of class

TIME:

Allow 1.5 hours for the session.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

A minimum of four participants is recommended.

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PREPARATION



VIDEO

Watch the following video:

<https://youtu.be/iyuz8lL1wq4>



HANDOUTS AND MATERIALS

Handouts (Make copies for parents, guardians and/or probation officers):

- Stop-Think-Plan-Do Model
- Impulsive Behavior Worksheet
- Take-Home Impressions Form



WRITE

Write the schedule on the white board for reference for participants throughout the treatment group:

- Structure and topic
- Applied Practice Review
- Impulsivity and brain injury
- Mindfulness Break
- Group activity
- Reflection and Discussion
- Wrap-up

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INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

ESTABLISH GROUP RULES

2-5 MINUTES

WRITE the following group rules on the white board for reference for participants throughout the treatment group:

1. Confidentiality
2. Respect
3. Participation

I am going to go over the rules for this group. If you have any questions about any of the group rules, please ask, and I can help to explain what that rule means.

There are 3 main rules:

The first is:

- 1. Confidentiality:** This means that what we discuss today stays in this room and is not shared with others.

That brings us to our second rule:

- 2. Respect:** Please be kind to one another, by...
 - Listening when someone else is speaking,
 - Not talking over each other,
 - And encouraging one another

The last rule is:

- 3. Participation:** We ask that you take part in the discussion. Your ideas are important to the group. At times, I may need to cut discussion short. I will tell the group when discussion time is over.

Note: As a reminder, rules only need to be reviewed in depth if there are new members who have not participated in previous weeks. Rules are discussed at the start of each group and only a brief reminder should be utilized for groups with no new members.



ICE BREAKER AND INTRODUCTION

5-10 MINUTES

Have each member of the group pick a number from 1 to 10. The number they pick corresponds to the number of the question they will answer (see questions below). The rest of the group can answer the same question or pick a different number and answer a different question.

1. What is your favorite movie and/or book?
2. What is your favorite food?
3. What is your favorite sports team?
4. If you were stuck on an island what three things would you bring?
5. If you had a yacht, what would you name it?
6. What is your favorite song?
7. What is your favorite subject in school?
8. Who is your favorite non-fictional character?
9. If you go travel anywhere (earth or space) where would you go?
10. If you could have a superpower, which one would it be?



APPLIED PRACTICE REVIEW

5-10 MINUTES

Last week you were asked to complete a personal anger management safety plan.

- What were your impressions from the anger management module?
- Have you had the opportunity to use your safety plan this week?

If participants attended the previous module but did not complete the practice, ask them the following questions:

- What would make it easier for you to do the practice?



EXPLAIN THE NATURE AND PACING OF THE GROUP

2-5 MINUTES

Today, I will guide you through several topics about brain injury and impulsivity. The primary goals for this session will be to help you have a better understanding of impulsivity and its connection to brain injuries. It is going to be important for us to identify various situations where you are at an increased risk of behaving impulsively and identify the factors that contribute to your impulsivity.

We will also learn how impulsivity is related to brain injuries and discuss how awareness of your impulsivity will help you in future decision making. Finally, we will practice decision-making skills, and review a practice assignment on “Stop-Think-Do”. Remember: To get through all the material, I will be keeping us on point by giving reminders when that section’s time is almost up. Do you have any questions before we begin?

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CONTENT



INTRODUCE IMPULSIVITY AND GOALS FOR THIS MODULE

5-10 MINUTES

Ask participants to provide their own definition of impulsivity.

Briefly describe impulsive behaviors.

- “Impulsive” means rash, quick, or hasty (without careful consideration of future consequences). An impulsive decision is one made very quickly, with little time given to consider the possible outcomes of that decision.
- Examples can include:
 - Destroying property when angry
 - “Borrowing” something without asking first
 - Acting without thinking
 - Irritability and temper outbursts
 - Yelling out answers before questions have been completed
 - Intruding or interrupting conversations
 - Not waiting patiently for your turn

Ask participants how they think brain injuries can affect impulsivity.

- Brain injuries 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. Learning to identify impulsivity can help you improve your life skills and this will help you navigate through life. The more you learn about this, you will be more likely to avoid unwanted personal consequences in the future.

- It is important to remember the impulsive behavior is related to the injury on the brain, it is often not deliberate, it might not be noticeable by the person, and it can fluctuate depending on other factors such as:
 - Substance abuse
 - Environmental factors (noise, crowds, lighting, etc.)
 - Person-centered situational factors (time of day, lack of sleep, hunger, etc.)



STRATEGIES FOR IMPULSE CONTROL

5-10 MINUTES

Can you tell me about a time when you behaved impulsively?

Discuss these situations and ask these follow up questions:

- What was the outcome?
- What factors contributed to your impulsivity in these situations?

Hand out the stop-think-plan-do model and write it on the board. Explain each section of the model and what it means, provide examples or ask participants to offer examples for each section. Once you review the model with the participants, ask the following questions.

- Can you think of a time that you were able to stop and think before acting?
- What strategies did you use in that instance?

MINDFULNESS BREAK

5 MINUTES

Now we are going to take a five-minute break. During this break, we are going to practice a mindfulness exercise. Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, and not be overwhelmed by our surroundings. Mindfulness is a good strategy for dealing with overwhelming emotions and helping you manage impulsive behavior. For this exercise you can stay in your chairs, or you can sit on the floor.

Read the following exercise out loud.

Begin by bringing your attention into your body.

You can close your eyes if that's comfortable for you.

You can notice your body seated wherever you're seated, feeling the weight of your body on the chair, on the floor.

Take a few deep breaths.

And as you take a deep breath, bring in more oxygen enlivening the body. And as you exhale, have a sense of relaxing more deeply.

You can notice your feet on the floor, notice the sensations of your feet touching the floor. The weight and pressure, vibration, heat.

You can notice your legs against the chair, pressure, pulsing, heaviness, lightness.

Notice your back against the chair.

Bring your attention into your stomach area. If your stomach is tense or tight, let it soften. Take a breath.

Notice your hands. Are your hands tense or tight? See if you can allow them to soften.

Notice your arms. Feel any sensation in your arms. Let your shoulders be soft.

Notice your neck and throat. Let them be soft. Relax.

Soften your jaw. Let your face and facial muscles be soft.

Then notice your whole-body present. Take one more breath.

Be aware of your whole body as best you can. Take a breath. And then when you're ready, you can open your eyes.

After the break is finished, encourage the participants to do mindfulness on their own if they found it useful.

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GROUP ACTIVITY



10-15 MINUTES

Hand out the **Impulsive Behavior Worksheet** (page 127) and read the instructions for the participants.

By writing down your experiences and thoughts, you make it easier to understand patterns and it may show you what areas need improvement. You can share these patterns with your parents or PO.



DISCUSSION AND WRAP-UP

5-10 MINUTES

Hand out the *Take-Home Impressions form* and ask the participants to complete it. Use the following wrap-up questions and the answers to the take-home impressions form as prompts for this closing discussion:

Please share your responses to the take-home form.

- What piece(s) of information did you find most helpful? Most interesting? Most surprising?
- Can you think of any other strategies that can help you with your impulsivity?
- What role does belief in yourself play in your ability to overcome these challenges?
- Do you have question about the material we discussed today?
- How do you think that the stop-think-do model is helpful? How can you use this model in your own life?
- Is there any advice you want to share with your peers?

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HANDOUTS

STOP-THINK-PLAN-DO MODEL

IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR WORKSHEET

TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS FORM

STOP-THINK-PLAN-DO MODEL



STOP:

Before doing/saying something.



THINK:

About impact of behavior and of another strategy.



PLAN:

Steps needed to engage in strategy/behavior



DO:

The action/behavior

IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR WORKSHEET

To begin, choose a specific and recent example of impulsive behavior. On a piece of paper, write the specific event at the top of the page and then draw a line vertically down the middle of the page.

On the left side of the page you will write down every *(T)hought, (F)eeling, (E)vent, (BS) Body Sensations* and *(B)ehaviors* leading up to and during the problem. You want this to be as detailed as possible.

After you have completed this, you will then write on the right-hand side alternative thoughts, skills, or tools you could use next time.

For example, if you tend to have problems with anger and you punched someone it might look like this:

I got angry, irritable, mad <i>(F)</i>	Imagine my happy place
I had not had breakfast that day <i>(E)</i>	Take time to eat something
Tense shoulders <i>(BS)</i>	Breathing exercise
Punched another person <i>(E)</i>	Walk away

TAKE-HOME IMPRESSIONS FORM

You are encouraged to fill out this handout after attending each meeting. It is designed to help you retain as much of what you learned in today's session as possible. In your own words, please answer the following:

Today I learned:

I will share this with: _____, because:

I still have questions about:

This strategy will help me:

I will use this strategy when:
