

what's an impulse? 14

for you to know

An *impulse* is an immediate desire to move your body or take action. People who obey their impulses without thinking about the possible consequences are often described as "impulsive." If you're impulsive, you typically act first, then question later whether the action was a good one. Many times, teens who act impulsively can get into trouble with parents, teachers, or the law.

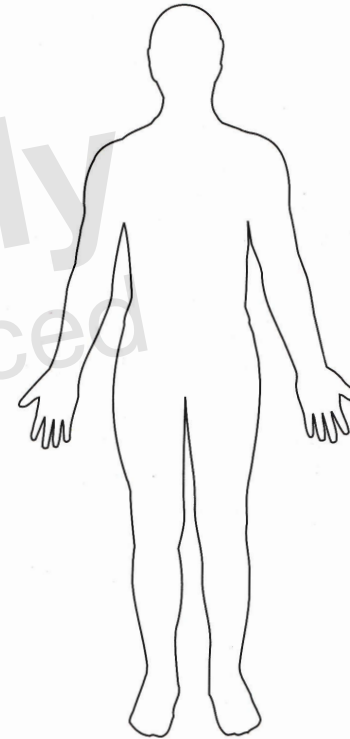
Chiara, a sixth-grader, was forever interrupting adults. Her reasoning was that if she didn't say what was on her mind, she might forget. Chiara also blurted out answers in class. Before the teacher could even finish her thought, Chiara would have the answer. Similarly, she often started assignments before reading all the directions, with the result that sometimes she didn't do what she was supposed to, and her grades suffered for it.

Several times, Chiara got into trouble with her parents and teachers over bad decisions that she knew better than to make. For instance, she'd go to a friend's house after school without letting her parents know, or she'd copy answers from other students in class. Once, she took a bracelet she liked from the store without paying for it. Her friends found it hard to be with her because they didn't want to get in trouble too when she did things like that—when she acted impulsively.

activity 14 * what's an impulse?

for you to do

Imagine that the following outline represents your body. Put an X on the areas of the body in which you feel the urge to move or act.



Write down the types of things you do that are impulsive (done without thinking of the consequences).

more to do

Many times, impulsive teens are told to stop doing the impulsive behavior; however, it's not that simple. It takes time to turn an old habit around. Still, remembering to STOP can help you make better choices more often. STOP stands for Stop, Think, Observe, and Plan.

S—Stop what you're doing.

T—Think about why you did what you just did.

O—Observe how what you just did affected the people involved.

P—Plan what to do differently next time.

Try it now. Choose one of the impulsive acts you wrote down in the previous exercise, and imagine that you just did it. Answer the following questions, which use the STOP format, to help you think of a better action—maybe one that would get you a little of what you desire now, or one that would help you get it later, without the negative consequences.

Stop what you're doing.

What did you just do (the impulsive act)? _____

Think about why you did what you just did.

Why did you just do that? (Place a check mark next to all that apply.)

- To avoid an adult
- To avoid a peer
- To avoid a task
- To get adult attention
- To get peer attention
- To get items/activities
- I don't know

Observe how what you just did affected the people involved.

How were the people involved affected? _____

Plan what to do differently next time.

Write what you'll try instead to get what you want in the future.

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