

Self-Control

Grades 9-12

Segment Summary:

A lack of self-control led Dan O’Brian down the dark path of drug and alcohol addiction, but now he is learning new strategies to combat the daily struggle with his obsession.

“Out of control” – that’s how Dan O’Brian described his addiction to drugs and alcohol. He first started drinking occasionally when he was 12 years old, and by the time he reached the 10th grade, he had developed a full-blown addiction that had taken over his life. Dan’s goal each day was to get stoned or drunk, and sadly, no one was aware of the trouble he was experiencing. He recalls how he had to lead a double life. Sometimes he played the part of the all-American kid, and at other times, he resorted to stealing from his parents and friends. Dan was definitely out of control. It took a conversation with his parents one night for him to admit he needed help, but he still had a problem. Even though he wanted help, he had no self-control when it came to his addiction. Dan needed to go to rehab to learn skills that could help him control his compulsion to use drugs and alcohol. His experience has taught him that self-control is a constant challenge, and he is meeting it one step at a time.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is an addiction?
2. Was Dan’s lack of self-control linked to his use of drugs and alcohol, or did it exist before he even started abusing them? Was he predisposed to his condition?
3. What are some ways in which Dan’s lack of self-control with drugs and alcohol affected his life at school and at home?
4. In addition to the effects mentioned in the **Connect with Kids** video segment, what other consequences can you think of that Dan would eventually encounter if he continued to use drugs and alcohol?
5. What are some ways in which Dan learned he could take control of his life?
6. Dan’s failure to show self-control began to take its toll in his life. What are some ways in which you’ve seen others’ lives affected by a failure to show self-control?
7. What do you think would have happened to Dan if he hadn’t tried to take control of his addiction?
8. Why do you think so many people can’t control themselves when using drugs and alcohol?
9. In what ways are you like Dan? How are you different?
10. Why is it important to practice self-control in all areas of your life, not just some?
11. Why is it harder for some people than others to show self-control at school, at home, in their communities, etc.?

Vocabulary Words and Definitions:

Addiction (n.)

Definition: a strong desire to have or do something regularly when it is difficult to stop; compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance

Context: Some weight problems are caused by an addiction to sugar and fat.

Compulsion (n.)

Definition: a strong and unreasonable desire to do something

Context: The compulsion to use drugs is something every addict must fight on a regular basis.

Discipline (n.)

Definition: the ability a person has to control his or her own behavior and way of working

Context: She has enough discipline to study for an hour each day instead of watching television.

Impetuous (adj.)

Definition: tending to perform tasks or behave very quickly and without thinking carefully first

Context: William's impetuous behavior led him to dive headfirst into the lake.

Impulse (n.)

Definition: a sudden strong desire to do something without thinking about the results

Context: The impulse to blame someone else for your mistakes is strongest when you know you'll be punished for your actions.

Instinct (n.)

Definition: a natural tendency or ability to behave or react in a particular way without having to learn it or thing about it

Context: Her first instinct was to open the door when the bell rang, but then Sheila realized she didn't know who was on the other side.

Monologue (n.)

Definition: a long speech by one character in a play, movie or television show

Context: Many people are able to recite Romeo's balcony monologue from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Political cartoon (n.)

Definition: a funny drawing, often including a humorous remark, about a news event or politicians

Context: A political cartoon can be difficult to understand if you are not aware of current events.

Provoke (v.)

Definition: to make someone very angry, especially by annoying him or her

Context: Alder tried to provoke Barton by teasing him about his glasses.

Self-control (n.)

Definition: the ability to behave calmly and sensibly even when a person feels very excited, angry, etc.

Context: Rodney refused to stop singing during class, and his lack of self-control resulted in detention.

Self-indulgence (n.)

Definition: excessive or unrestrained gratification of a person's own appetites, desires or whims

Context: Maria's self-indulgence at the dinner table caused her to gain weight.

Willpower (n.)

Definition: a person's ability to control his or her own mind and body in order to achieve a desire

Context: With the right amount of willpower, Wilma was able to beat her gambling addiction.

Source: *Longman Advanced American Dictionary*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. 2000

Activity: Make a Decision

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Identify the role of self-control in conflict resolution
- Identify alternative responses to conflict
- Infer the general causes of conflict among groups and individuals
- Use decision-making skills to determine the best solution to conflict

Materials:

- Pens, pencils
- **Make a Decision** worksheet

Procedure:

1. Begin a class discussion based on this scenario: Think about a time when you were in a conflicting situation. Maybe a person verbally attacked you, or maybe you accidentally bumped into someone who overreacted. You had to make a decision about how to respond.
 - Did you react on your first impulse? Why or why not? Was your first impulse impetuous?
 - What were your other choices?
 - Did you have time to really think about the consequences? Why or why not? If you had time to think about the consequences, would you have responded differently?
2. Distribute the **Make a Decision** worksheet. Present the following scenario to students:
 - Monique and Darrell are both running for class president. While campaigning, Monique spreads bad rumors about Darrell. During the election debate, Monique verbally attacks Darrell, calling him weak and phony. How should Darrell respond to this situation?
3. Have students work independently to first identify the problem and then decide on two ways Darrell can respond. They should record their answers in the boxes labeled Problem, Choice A and Choice B on the **Make a Decision** worksheet.
4. After students choose two responses, give them time to think about the pros and cons of each solution and record their responses under the appropriate choices. Then, assign students to examine the pros and cons to decide on the best response.
5. After completing the **Make a Decision** worksheet, have students discuss their final decisions.
6. End the activity with these follow-up questions:
 - What are some other examples of conflict?
 - What are the general causes of conflict?
 - Does self-indulgence play a role in causing these types of conflicts?
 - What role does self-control play in resolving these types of conflicts?

Make a Decision

Name: _____

