

Self-Control

Grades 6-8

Segment Summary:

Counseling sessions on anger management have helped Latasha Graham and her mother realize the importance of self-control when developing positive relationships with others.

When Latasha Graham gets angry, her first instinct is to fight, and she can't control it. Her violent behavior toward her classmates and teachers was so far out of control that she was kicked out of school. But her problems didn't begin at school – Latasha learned to fight at home. She and her mother were always involved in a conflict, and neither one of them was able to control the anger inside. Latasha's mother cursed at her and called her names, and whenever her mother got angry, Latasha says that she would be on the receiving end of her mother's wrath. The emotions Latasha felt about the way her mother treated her kept building until an unhealthy cycle began to evolve. She didn't have any strategies to cope with her anger, so she modeled her mother, taking her anger out on other people. That was four years ago. Now Latasha and her mother are both receiving counseling and learning skills to help them cope with their anger. Latasha listens to jazz music to help calm herself down. She now feels good about being able to walk away from a fight, she has more privileges and she feels people respect her more. Regulating their anger is still an everyday struggle for both Latasha and her mother, but now they have the tools they need to take control of their lives.

Discussion Questions:

1. What characteristics does Latasha possess?
2. What is the relationship between self-control and discipline?
3. How does lack of self-control affect Latasha's life at school, at home, in her neighborhood, etc.?
4. What specific words would you use to describe Latasha's behavior?
5. What do you think Latasha means when she says fighting "felt good sometimes"?
6. Can you predict some other areas in which Latasha might lack self-control?
7. How did Latasha's relationship with her mother influence the way she related to other people?
8. Latasha says her mother hit her. Her mother denies it. Whom do you believe? Why?
9. Is Latasha someone you'd choose for a friend? Why or why not?
10. How does maintaining self-control give people greater options in life?
11. Do you believe people who have greater self-control are more respected? Why or why not?
12. How do you cope with negative feelings that you have built up inside? How did you learn this coping strategy?

Vocabulary Word 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.

Commitment (n.)

Definition: a promise to do something or behave in a particular way

Context: Volunteers at the homeless shelter must be able to make a commitment to work at least four hours a week.

Conflict (n.)

Definition: a state of disagreement or argument between people, groups or countries

Context: Instead of fighting with Antonio, he tried to resolve the conflict by talking about the problem.

Consequence (n.)

Definition: something that happens as the result of a particular action or situation

Context: Damage to your brain cells is one consequence of taking illegal drugs.

Coping strategy (n.)

Definition: a well-planned action or series of actions to help people succeed in dealing with a difficult problem or job

Context: Parents must develop a coping strategy for handling babies who cry when they are hungry.

Evaluate (v.)

Definition: to carefully consider something in order to make a judgment about how good or useful it is

Context: The teacher will evaluate your work to make sure you're meeting the academic standards.

External (adj.)

Definition: coming from the outside of something, such as a body, organization, group or business

Context: Keisha was late for her exam due to external forces beyond her control.

Frustration (n.)

Definition: the feeling of being annoyed, upset or impatient because one cannot control or change a situation or achieve something

Context: Her frustration stemmed from the fact that Benton arrived early and spoiled the surprise.

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.

Internal (adj.)

Definition: inside something rather than outside; existing in someone's mind

Context: Thomas struggled with the internal conflict of whether or not to try smoking a cigarette.

Outcome (n.)

Definition: the final result of a process, especially when no one knows what it will be until it happens

Context: Tamara knew if she got caught skipping school, the outcome would be suspension.

Self-control (n.)

Definition: the ability to behave calmly and sensibly, even when you feel very excited or angry

Context: Hector's problem with maintaining self-control in school led to academic troubles in his classes.

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

Activity: Extra, Extra – Read All about It!

Objectives:

Students should be able to

- Recognize short- and long-term consequences of unhealthy drug use
- Give examples of negative outcomes of unhealthy drug use
- Describe how good decisionmaking can prevent drug-related accidents and injuries
- Categorize various drug-related problems

Materials:

- Pencils, pens, chalk
- Paper
- Chalkboard or overhead projector
- Newspaper or magazine articles (print or online) about drug-related accidents or injuries

Procedure:

1. Write the following topics on the board:
 - Physical health
 - Personal feelings and attitudes
 - Family relationships, friendships and social groups
2. Ask students to give examples of drug-related problems and to place each problem into at least one of the categories listed in *Step 1*.
3. Explain that unhealthy drug use involves a decision to use drugs irresponsibly and can lead to short- and long-term consequences.
4. Divide the class into pairs. Ask each pair to research newspapers, magazines or Internet news services to find an article describing a drug-related accident or event.
5. Ask students to evaluate the article and answer the following questions based on the information in the article. List the following questions on the board for students to consider:
 - What role did unhealthy drug use play in the accident or event?
 - What types of problems did the incident create based on these categories: physical health; personal feelings and attitudes; family relationships, friendships and social groups?
 - What are the short-term consequences of the drug-related accident or event?
 - What are the long-term consequences of the drug-related accident or event?
 - How could the outcomes have been different if drugs or alcohol were not involved?
6. Allow students to share their responses with the class.