



### **Activity 3 - Overcoming Setbacks – “Working Out your Self-Control Muscles”**

Work Out your Self-Control Muscles –Like a muscle, the more you practice and exercise self-control the stronger you get. It can be very helpful to practice self-control in a variety of life areas as it can actually help you build and strengthen your overall ability to control impulses and desires that can lead to setbacks in your progress.

Some simple examples of ways that you can “work out” and strengthen your personal sense of self control like a muscle can include:

- **Waiting patiently to give in to desires including simple ones can help later with the stronger desires.**
- **Practicing saying “no” assertively. The more you can learn to say “no” in simple situations is a way to practice for saying no to bigger temptations**
- **Practicing adhering to schedules and positive routines, starting small then build as you go**
- **Learning to accept direction by listening to the advice of others who care about you even if you don’t immediately agree**

#### **SELF CONTROL ICEBREAKER EXERCISE – The Self-Control Challenge:**

Directions – In order to get the group thinking about practicing self-control, complete a few or all of the following simple exercises:

**Exercise 1 – Group Silence.** Someone set a timer and see if the group can remain completely silent for three minutes straight. It may take a few tries.

Process –

- How did you do as an individual?
- As a group?
- Were there any specific challenges or obstacles?
- How did this involve practicing self-control?

**Exercise 2 – Eat Just One Potato Chip (or Cookie)** – Counselor or group leader give everyone one potato chip or one cookie or other equivalent.

Discuss -

- This may be easier to do as a group then when alone, but still discuss what it is like to try to just have one of something and then stop.
- Specifically, how does self-control come into play in this situation?

**Exercise 3 – House of Cards** – Take a deck of cards and divide it up evenly between everyone. See if the group can make a house of cards that stays standing in less than 5 minutes.

Discuss -

- Where you able to do it successfully?
- What kind of self-control was involved physically?
- How about mentally?



**Exercise 4 – *Keeping Your Mouth Shut*** – Take a few minutes to see if there are some sets of people who feel strongly about a topic but have opposing views in areas such as sports or politics. For example one person in the group may think Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player ever, while another person may say LeBron James, for example. Flip a coin and only the winner of the coin flip gets to have make a two minute speech about their viewpoint while the person who lost the coin toss has to sit and listen and cannot make a counter argument.

**IMPORTANT** – Be respectful and refrain from insulting anyone when doing this because it is supposed to be fun but not to make other people upset. If there is time repeat this with two other people with different topics.

Process -

- For the person listening, what was it like to have to bite your tongue and listen to a viewpoint you disagree with?
- What was it like for the rest of the group to watch?



# SELF CONTROL

It's knowing when you've had enough.



## Ways to Work Out Your Self-Control Muscles

There are some basic life areas that you can work on little by little that will help you increase your ability to self-regulate and to practice good self-control. Keep in mind, these things take practice but with time and persistence, you will see positive results, similar to the way you get stronger physically after some time spent dedicated to going to the gym. Some of these areas are:

### Learning to Practice Patience –

When building patience what is required is gradually practicing increasing the amount of time that you can tolerate waiting for things. A good example could be to make yourself practice waiting for various forms of pleasure or reward. Let's say for example you have the habit of going directly to eating sweets after dinner every night. A good way to practice patience and self-control would be to add a period of wait time before going for desert and increasing that wait time gradually over time to build patience and self-control. Other areas where you can practice patience include:

- **Learning to wait before checking your phone** – So many of us are in the habit of checking our phone the second we get some kind of notification. You can practice patience and self-control by turning off notifications you don't really need and learning to get out of the habit of stopping what you are doing to look at your phone the minute you feel the urge to do so
- **Learning to wait to speak.** When you feel the urge to answer or respond during a conversation, practice waiting and listening more to the other person before responding. (There are secondary benefits to learning to wait to speak because a lot of trouble can be avoided when we practice taking the time to think before impulsively responding or commenting on things prematurely or before considering all the facts)
- **Learning patience while driving.** Learning to tolerate traffic and inconsiderate drivers without getting angry or stressed out or losing control is an excellent way to practice self-control and patience
- **Learning to wait for rewards** - . A good way to learn patience is to start to schedule more pleasurable activities *after* you first complete less pleasurable ones first. For example, waiting to watch television and have coffee in the morning until after you do your crunches or other exercises. Postponing having a cigarette, or waiting longer before you reach for a snack or a desert are ways to practice and increase self-control

### Practicing Saying “No” Assertively:

Just like learning patience, it can be extremely useful to strengthen your ability to say “no”. That simple word, for some is so difficult to say. If you can learn to say “no” to others it helps with the ability to say “no” to yourself. Just like learning patience, learning to say “no” involves strengthening your “no” muscle. If your ability to say “no” is weak, it is essential to start small and practice saying “no” in easy situations first. The best way to do this is to give yourself an assignment, for example:

- ***In the next week, I must say “no” at least \_\_\_\_\_ times***

(The more you practice saying no the easier it gets with time)



### Practice adhering to schedules and positive routines.

Another way to develop self-control is by practicing closely following positive routines and schedules in your life. Like a tightrope walker, following a routine requires concentration, balance and self-control so as not to go off the left or to the right. Similar to the other areas involving learning self-control, it is best to start small and expand over time. The following are some simple examples:

- I will start jogging for 15 minutes every other day after work
- I will read something educational and enriching for 10 minutes before bed on weekdays
- I will start saving \$50 out of my paycheck each week
- I will completely stop eating after 7:00pm every evening
- I will make sure to call or visit my elderly grandmother every Friday to see how she is doing

The routines you come up with do not have to be difficult; in fact at first they should be simple and attainable. The more you practice staying on a designated course of behavior such as adhering to basic routines, the more you strengthen your ability to maintain self-control, thus enhancing your overall skills for excelling in the upward change process and eliminating setbacks.

### Learning to accept direction by listening to the advice of others:

It often involves a good deal of self-control to give up control. There are often situations in our lives when other people we know and trust give us advice that we deep down know is good for us, but following that advice can be another story. It takes self-control to be able to hold back our own impulses and urges in order to follow the direction of someone else who we trust. A good example of putting this into practice would be something like:

- I will ask the advice of at least two reliable, trustworthy people who have their own lives together about any major decisions I am thinking about, before taking action

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## Activity – Self Control Scorecard

Directions – See how you rate in each of the areas just discussed by asking two group members to rate you, your counselor to rate you, then by rating yourself. Ratings should be based on the following scale:

- A - This is an area of strength**
- B – Some work might be needed but this is not a weakness**
- C – Improvement seems to be needed in this area**

Self-Control Scorecard

Name \_\_\_\_\_

	<u>Group Member 1</u>	<u>Group Member 2</u>	<u>Counselor</u>	<u>Self</u>
<u>Displaying Patience</u>				
<u>Saying “No” Assertively</u>				
<u>Sticking with positive routines.</u>				
<u>Listening to the advice of others</u>				

Use this page to pass around and get scores:

- First from a group member who knows you pretty well
- Second from any other group member
- Third, from one of the counselors or group leaders
- Finally take your own paper back and rate yourself in each area

COMMENTS – If anyone has specific comments write them here:



**Self-Control Scorecard – Discussion:** Answer the following as a group:

- **How do you feel about how others rated you? Do you agree or disagree? Did others view match your own view of yourself?**
- **Based on your scorecard, what are some of your areas of strength?**
- **What do you think you may need to work on the most?**

**Making Application – Final Practicing Self-Control Worksheet:**

What are some ways you can practice and increase your self-control? Consider some specific areas below and brainstorm some creative examples:

How can you learn to increase patience? What are some specific things you can practice waiting for instead of giving in to right away?

Practicing saying “no” assertively – What are some examples in your own life where you need to practice saying no?

Adhering to schedules and positive routines. – What are some specific ways you can improve or “tighten up” your routines and schedule?

Accepting direction - What examples can you think of in your life where you may need to learn to accept direction by listening to others even when you don’t immediately agree with them? Be honest. What good advice have you been overlooking or ignoring?

