

# Self-Control

## Syllables

self-con•trol

## Pronunciation

self-kuh n-troh

## Definition

Curbing (moderating) one's impulses, emotions, or desires.

(*Esther had to muster all of her **self-control** to keep from punching Shari right in the nose.*)

**Simply put:** Control yourself!

## Related Terms

Self-discipline: Regulating oneself as a path toward improvement.

Self-possession: Controlling one's emotions in a stressful situation.

## Fundamental Question:

Who's in control of you?

**Students will investigate the ideas that** in order to control one's actions, a person must first control his or her thoughts.

## Objectives

Each student will:

1. Investigate the importance of self-control;
2. Explore the rationale for thought being the prerequisite for self-control; and
3. Contribute ideas to a list of scenarios exploring positive and negative thoughts and their consequences.

## Before you begin

- Fill a clear container (e.g., glass cylinder) half way up with water to which a few drops of food coloring has been added for visibility;
- On the board write "Half Full" and "Half Empty"; and
- Print out a copy of *Half-Empty*, *Half-Full* for each student.

## Suggested Sidebars:

### Speaking of Self-Control (Discussion Idea)

What are some characteristics of a person who has little or no self-control? What are some characteristics of a person who has great self-control? (Record responses on the board.) Most of us have a few traits of each. Overall, do you think of yourself more as a person with or without much self-control?

### Taking It to the Next Level

Just as positive thoughts boost your ability to make choices that are respectful to yourself and others, negative thoughts can do the opposite. Thoughts about ourselves and others, things we want, and so on, lead to feelings, which in turn lead to behavior. Invite a juvenile corrections officer to speak with your group about what can happen in the legal world when our minds are flooded with negative thoughts.

# Self-Control

## Procedure

1. Place the water container on a table where everyone can see it. How many students would describe the container as being half-full of liquid? Ask for a show of hands. Record the number of responses under the correct heading on the board. Find out how many would consider it to be half-empty and record that number on the board, too.
2. Say, “You all saw the same container, yet some of you described it as half full and some described it as half empty. You all saw it, but you interpreted the information differently. The differences are in how you perceived, interpreted, and evaluated the information in your head. Sometimes, each of us “sees the glass half full” (at least there’s *something* in the glass: optimistically, positively) and at other times we see things “half empty” (some of the water is *missing*: pessimistically, negatively).
3. On the board write: **Thoughts → Feelings → Actions**

Ask. “What do you think this might mean?” (Thoughts lead to feelings, which lead to actions. The things you think can make you feel a certain way and the way you feel can make you behave a certain way.)

Say, “Please, give an example.” (e.g., A person walks past a mirror and *thinks* “I’m so fat. I must be stupid for letting myself get this fat.” That makes the person *feel* disappointed, so (s)he takes comfort [acts] by eating a big piece of cake.)

Continue this train of thought as desired. For instance, “Do you think (s)he felt better after eating the cake? Explain your answer. Was the person having positive or negative thoughts when (s)he looked in the mirror?” (negative) “How might a person with positive thoughts have responded? (A person walks past a mirror and thinks “Woah! These pants look kind of tight!” (S)he *feels* surprised! “I guess I’d better *act* now to add a few minutes to my work-out routine!”)

Remember, your mind is designed to believe what it thinks. It is important to have self-control over what you are thinking and feeling so that your feelings and actions will be appropriate.

3. **Follow up:** Divide the class into groups of three. Explain to the children in each group that they will work together to develop three scenarios like the ones in the examples above. Distribute the *Half-Empty, Half-Full* activity sheets.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Reminder:** Self-control means curbing (moderating) your own impulses, emotions, or desires.

## Half-Empty, Half-Full

Thoughts → Feelings → Actions

**What happened?** Two people saw their reflections and noticed a few extra bulges. Both saw more-or-less the same thing, but they perceived, interpreted, and evaluated the information differently.

**A half-empty response:** A person walks past a mirror and *thinks* “I’m so fat. I must be stupid for letting myself get this fat.” That makes the person *feel* disappointed, so (s)he takes comfort [(s)he *acts*] by eating a big piece of cake.

**A half-full response:** A person walks past a mirror and *thinks* “I don’t remember these pants looking that tight!” (S)he *feels* surprised! “I guess I’d better *act* now to add a few minutes to my work out routine!”

**Directions:** Develop three more scenarios to show the affect of positive and negative thoughts on feelings and actions.

**What happened?** Example: Someone said, “I don’t like you. Nobody does.”

**A half-empty response:**

**A half-full response:**

**What happened?**

**A half-empty response:**

**A half-full response:**

**What happened?**

**A half-empty response:**

**A half-full response:**

Today’s thought: *By constant self-discipline and self-control you can develop greatness of character.* — **Grenville Kleiser, author**