

A close-up, low-angle shot of a runner's legs and feet in a starting crouch on a paved road. The runner is wearing silver and red sneakers and a white wristwatch. The background shows a desert landscape with mountains under a cloudy sky.

On your mark.  
Get set.  
Slow down.

## HOW TO CHECK YOUR *IMPULSIVITY*.

I have impulsively decided to write about impulsivity. Ha, seriously though...if you can't tell by the title, I am a huge fan of running. I love to get outside and clear my head, and running helps me keep on track and stay focused. In fact, some of my best ideas come to me when I am moving, so when writing a blog about something related to ADHD, I had to go for a run to brainstorm. Ultimately, I landed on impulsivity.

What does it mean to be impulsive? Typically, it has to do with having a problem with emotional or behavioral self-control. When emotions or thoughts hit, you cannot keep them inside. They just have to come out, and often without even thinking about it! Or when you have the urge to do something, you go ahead and do it without thought. When someone is impulsive, they act on instinct without thinking through decisions. Could this be why I got so many speeding tickets as a teenager or found myself in minor car accidents and fender benders? Impulsive decisions while driving does not always turn out well. Have you ever had grand ideas and act on them without thinking? Has something popped in your head and you feel it needs to be said right then and there before you forget regardless of the situation or context of the conversation? Are these actions usually met with blank stares where you wish you could take back what you said?

Impulsivity however, can be a great if your instinct is good and the behavior that follows is something that is ultimately positive. Like taking that leap and starting a new job opportunity, starting your own business or even a new activity that may advance your goals and even improve your health. Ultimately though, impulsive behavior sometimes leads to trouble that could be damaging. Such as excessive drinking, gambling, becoming violent or aggressive, binge eating...or shopping, which is my weakness. I have a tendency to impulsively buy things, which my husband will tell you can be very dangerous (to his wallet). Honestly, how many pairs of shoes do I really need?



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The definition of impulsive buying is the tendency of a customer to buy goods and services without planning in advance. Hmm, that's funny the only time I plan on buying in advance is for groceries and that is no fun! Marketers try to tap into this behavior to boost sales and guess what, it works! Anytime I see a discount or sale my inner dialog says I am getting a deal therefore I must buy before it is gone. Is this impulsive?

How do you work on impulsivity? A first step might be to remind yourself to stop and think. Ask yourself, "Do I really need to say that right now?" Or "Do I really need to have this right now?" Stop and ask yourself, "Why do I want that?" or "Why am I gobbling down that bag of chips or reaching for more chocolate?" One tactic that can help is building a daily mindfulness practice and trying to plan ahead. For example, when I go shopping, I could take a written list of what I plan to buy and stick with it (sale or not). It is also important to get a good night sleep.

What about impulsivity in kids? What are some tools that could help kids control their impulsive behaviors? Sometimes making a child aware of the impulsive behavior can be enough to diffuse it. If your child frequently interrupts you or your conversations, teach them to place their hand on your arm when they have something to say and wait for you to acknowledge him/her before speaking. Teach your child to pause and breathe when they feel their excitement or emotions building. This is also good advice for parents who are frustrated with their child's behaviors - take a deep breath before responding. And remember to praise patience. Most kids who struggle with ADHD and impulsivity want to behave so give them positive feedback when they show patience. Rewards for positive behavior can go a long way.



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