

# Pushing Pause

Science shows that by pausing, you can help shape your destiny through self-control

“OMG! Did I really just send that text?”

Most people have said something that they wish they could take back. And if they had paused to think about it first, they probably would have acted differently.

Pausing doesn't pay off just when you speak. Scientific studies have shown that making a habit of pausing before you do something can actually have a big impact on how your life turns out.

## THINKING IT THROUGH: THE TEEN BRAIN CHALLENGE

In making decisions we rely on two areas of the brain: 1) the *limbic system*, which creates and processes emotions, and 2) the *prefrontal cortex*, which governs logical thought. The type of decision, how we feel about it, and how prepared we are to handle it helps determine which brain area has the most influence.

But our age also plays an important role. Thinking through the consequences of one's actions is actually harder for teens because the prefrontal cortex is not fully developed until around age 25. This is why teens often feel an intense emotional drive to act impulsively—it's how their brains are structured!

Though this tendency to act without considering the outcomes can lead to problematic situations, impulsivity during the



developmental years evolved because it makes teens more open to new experiences and ideas. This openness helps teens become independent adults.

## TRAIN YOUR BRAIN

The key to making impulsivity work for you—instead of against you—is to train your brain by practicing pausing. This doesn't mean you stop taking risks or being open to new experiences. But you won't know if the risk is worth it until you think it through. Deciding to take a risk based on logic shows self-control, not impulsivity.

What are different ways to pause? You might take a deep breath, count to 10, or ask, “Is this worth it?” Different strategies work for different people. Whatever works for you, keep doing it!

By practicing pausing, you can actually change your brain. This means that over time, pausing, instead of immediately reacting, becomes your “natural” response. And with this change, people are on their way to enjoying the life rewards that come with high levels of self-control—even if they weren't natural-born pausers!

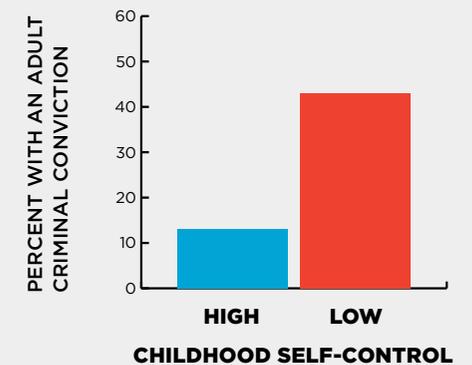
## High Self-Control = Bankroll

Pausing, paying attention, and not giving up are all key parts of self-control. Long-term scientific studies have linked a person's self-control when they were younger to how successful they became as adults. One study followed the behavior of nearly 1,000 children born in the same year in Dunedin, New Zealand, for 32 years!

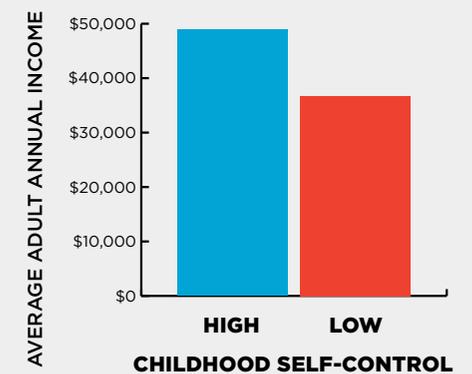
Through this research, scientists have shown that individuals with high self-control have better grades, stronger relationships, and greater income levels. Those with low self-control over time are more likely to be in trouble with the law, as well as have health problems, including drug addiction.



### CRIME: Impact of Self-Control on Adult Criminal Behavior



### WEALTH: Impact of Self-Control on Adult Income



## PAUSING PAYS OFF

Throughout our lives, there are opportunities where our level of self-control can directly and immediately influence important outcomes.

