



# Helping Your Child Learn Self-Control



Learning self-control is a lifelong process and so we should look at each day as an opportunity to help your child steadily grow in self-control. What can you do to help him or her?

**Model self-control.** Yelling at your child for yelling at his sibling is not the best example. Yes, we all get frustrated and lose our temper, but when we do, we need to model humility and apologize. (*I'm sorry I yelled at you. Will you forgive me?*) How else will he know what to do when he loses it?

**Lessen distractions.** If your child is distracted by toys when trying to do homework, find him a quiet place to work. (The whole family could even work quietly for an allotted time every evening.) If your child whines for a special snack, keep it out of sight until it is time for him to have it.

**Teach techniques to help him calm down.** Count to ten slowly. Take three deep breaths. Ask for help. Go to a quiet place. Run laps. Read a book. Whatever works for your child.

**Practice waiting.** It is okay to teach children to wait. Instead of letting them interrupt you while you are talking with someone, you may want to create a signal (such as touching his arm) to let him know that you are aware of his need and will speak to him as soon as you can. When my children were young, I would take them to church when no one was present and practice sitting quietly and explain what to do during the different activities.

**Create consequences that fit the situation.** Sometimes a simple re-direction of focus can work. One idea is to write age-appropriate jobs or activities on slips of paper and put them in a jar. (Pull 20 weeds. Clean a drawer in your room. Organize the books on the shelf. Dust the living room. Etc.) When he needs to re-direct, make him select and complete one job.

Share a simple experiment to show how our anger can grow *out of control* and hurt others.

- Fill a cup or glass almost full with warm water.
- Add several drops of the red food coloring (optional, but it is easier to see the reaction) and a few drops of liquid dish detergent.



- Add 2 tablespoons of baking soda.
- Slowly pour vinegar into the bottle and jump back quick! (Do this in a sink or outside.)

Ask: *How does this chemical reaction remind you of anger? What are some things that can happen when you get angry? What can you do when you feel anger building in you?* (pray, keep your mouth shut, be careful of what you say, etc.) Read **James 3:2-8** to find out about controlling your tongue.

**Pray with your child.** Keep asking the Holy Spirit who is at work inside him to help him do God's will. (Galatians 5:22, 23)

