Self Control in Kids: How to Help an Impulsive Child Calm the Brain First Transcript

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Impulsivity as Overload, Not Defiance

If your child could stop, they would. A nine-year-old promises he won't hit his brother again. Ten minutes later, he shuts him over a Lego tower. Then he locks himself in the bathroom and cries.

That's the part no one sees. Most impulsive kids aren't oppositional. They're just overloaded. And what parents see is the hit, the eye roll, Impulsive door slam, the homework shut down.

What you don't see is a nervous system that just lost access to the brake pedal because impulsive kids, man, they might be a Ferrari without bicycle brakes.

Neil Hollowell says that. It's a really great analogy because a lot of these kids are just high performance vehicles without brakes. What's actually happening is when stress spikes, because this is about dysregulation, the thinking brain goes offline.

survival brain takes over and reaction speeds up because that's what biology has designed our brain to do.

How Stress Shuts Down the Thinking Brain

We are not supposed to put the brakes on when we are in threat mode. The problem is we're walking around completely dysregulated and reflection disappears.

You can't stop and think when your brain feels threatened. And remember, this is real or imagine it's about a full stress cop. And this isn't going to happen not at age nine, not an age 15 at 45 not age 67. impulse control is state dependent depends on your nervous system.

This isn' a skill you just learn to have, it lowers when we are dysregulated. And in many kids, they live in a chronically stressed state. All those reasons we talked about, go back and listen to the sensory issue.

Maybe there's so many feeders as to what it could be. Your kids could have clinical issues that cause them to dys-regulate more, and that's why that impulsivity is there.

There's two different kinds of kids who can't stop. There isn't one impulsive brain, there are actually two. And the first is the flooded brain. They're explosive, they're fast, the big emotions, their system is overwhelmed and the brake pedal just isn t responding.

You can literally see this on a brain map.

Flooded vs. Underpowered Brains

I will say your kid like trying and just can't stop and they re like, yes, then we have the underpowered brain you see avoidance, Zoning out risk seeking.

Their brain is under activated. These are the kids that they could either be avoiders or high stimulus seekers because nothing's nothing stimulating. They're trying to wake up.

And it's a different energy, same outcome. No access to pause, no access, to stopping and thinking one moment and what we're doing. And you as a parent are probably like, you never listen.

You never stop and think. Why stricter rules actually backfire? So yelling increases threat, threat increases that stress response, that cortisol, and cortisol reduces executive functioning.

That's just biology, everybody. It's the way it works. And now the pause button is even harder to access. The next time we think we're building discipline, we are actually reinforcing survival mode.

We're reinforcing sympathetic dominance, hyper vigilance. Were actually reenforcing the behavior we don't want to see. So stop asking. How do I make them control themselves and start asking what state is their nervous system in?

Because remember, at any age, it's all state dependent.

Why Punishment and Pressure Backfire

So impulse control grows in safety, not fear, no shame, certainly not pressure. We keep pressuring our kids, just listen, do better. Safety is where it's going to really get better.

And I know how hard it is to have an impulsive kid, and that's why regulation first is so important, because most impulsive kids are not pushing back on purpose.

They're overloaded and overload brains don't need more pressure. They need a regulated adult to guide them to be their anchor and to create capacity in their nervous system so they can learn different skills.

And yes, some kids are more impulsive. Yes, maybe it is ADHD or autism or other things. But also some kids just need more space and time for that develop because we're moving away from play that teaches kids to self regulating become and we are teaching them academics and were somehow not making that connection to what is happening in the world.

We have all these dysregulated kids. and a high level of mental health.

Regulation, Safety, and Next Steps

So if issues in in our country but it's not far behind in other countries but countries that like Sweden and Finland they do not allow academics until age seven and they want play-based.

Those countries which it is freezing should be I always think when you're freezing you shouldn't be as happy but those are some of the happiest countries in the world.

We need to learn that we have to power down to Power Up. So if you're unsure about what's actually driving your kids behavior, if they're flooded or underpowered or anxious, what is happening, chronically stressed, stop guessing and take the solution manager at DrRosanna.com forward slash help.

Because when you understand the brain state and what happening in the nervous system, you can stop fighting the behavior and start building the pause.

This is how you help your child find calm and I hope this was helpful because impulsiveness doesn't always equal ADHD and yes they co-occur but impulsive this occurs in a lot of things and the path to helping your kid feel confident be able to put those brakes on is safety and safety only comes with regulation.

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