



Other activities to try at home

- **Simon Says.** Games like Simon Says are great for developing impulse control. In Simon Says, one person is Simon, and they give directions such as, “Simon says touch your nose.” The other players have to follow the directions *only* when the person says, “Simon says.” The game requires children to remember the rule, focus on the person in charge, and control their actions.
- **Food Preferences.** Give your child a choice of two snacks and ask them which they prefer. Then, take some of the other snack and eat it, saying “Mmm, I love this the best!” Then, ask your child to give you some more. Do they give you some of their preferred snack or yours?

The UM Living Lab is part of the LINK, a Science Education Partnership Award (NIH) funded collaboration between the City of Missoula, University of Montana, and Missoula Public Library to inspire the next generation.

SEPA SCIENCE EDUCATION
PARTNERSHIP AWARD
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This project was made possible by Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA), Grant Number 1R25GM132950-01, from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), National Institutes of Health (NIH). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NIGMS or NIH.

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Research Bites

**The relation between
impulse control and taking
others' perspectives**

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How good are kids at controlling their impulses? And what does it have to do with taking others' perspectives?



As children grow older, it becomes increasingly important for them to be able to control their impulses. If we didn't learn these skills, we'd all be blowing out candles on others' birthday cakes!

At the same time children are developing their **impulse control**, they are also developing their **Theory of Mind** – this is the understanding that other people have their own unique thoughts, feelings, and knowledge.

Researchers at the University of Washington¹ found that the better two-year-olds could **control their impulses**, the better they were at age 3 in their **Theory of Mind understanding**. Try out the same impulse control and Theory of Mind activities used in the original study and see how your child does on each.

Impulse Control Activity: Whispering

Tell your child that you are going to play a whispering game together. Tell them in a whisper voice that you are going to point to a picture of an animal, and they are going to whisper the name of that animal to you. Use the pictures of animals on the next page. See how long they can keep up with the whispering (controlling their impulse to talk in a regular voice). Make sure that you keep whispering, too!



Theory of Mind Activity: Band-Aids and Markers

Point to the picture of the Band-Aids box and ask your child, “**What do you think is inside?**” They will likely say Band-Aids. Then, show them the picture on the next page that shows markers inside the box.



Next, ask your child what someone else (a sibling, friend, another parent) who hadn't seen the markers in the box would think was in the closed box. If they say “markers,” they might not quite understand that others can have a ‘false belief’ – that is, others would not know what the child already knows to be true (that there's really markers inside the box!).

This activity was developed with support from the National Living Laboratory, using funding from the National Science Foundation under Award Number 1113648. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.



¹ Carlson, S.M., Mandell, D.J., & Williams, L. (2004). Executive function and theory of mind: Stability and prediction from ages 2 to 3. *Developmental Psychology*, 40, 1105-1122.