



DIVISION OF
Arts and Sciences

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Dear Arts & Sciences Students, Faculty, and Staff:

Hello, I am Jason Stone, the Division Head of Arts & Sciences at OSU-OKC. Let's continue our conversation about your future. I am delighted that you chose to invest in yourself and attend to the next video in our series about the Habits of the Mind. The Habit that we are stressing in this video is managing your impulsivity.

The World English Dictionary defines impulsivity as, "characterized by actions based on sudden desires, whims, or inclinations rather than careful thought." We all have impulsive thoughts, but a habit of the mind worthy of cultivation is managing your impulsivity.

Impulsive thoughts are common and not in and of themselves bad. We all have little urges that we indulge or resist. However, it is when we allow some of those harmful thoughts to manifest themselves in behavior that we run into problems. Some examples of impulsive behaviors that damage our reputations and our relationships with others at home, school, and work are: saying the first thing that comes to mind, making snap decisions, and interrupting other people.

In fact, Dr. Matthew Tull, an Associate Professor & Director of Anxiety Disorders Research in the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, writes that impulsive behavior is often a short-term coping mechanism. Unfortunately, those same impulsive behaviors that make us feel good in the short-term often have long-term negative consequences.

Please consider this example: suppose that you work at an entry-level job with a good company and your co-worker in the next cubicle has a number of distracting work behaviors. One afternoon you have had enough and you decide to confront them about these annoying behaviors. It might feel great to vent and raise your voice at your co-worker. However, you may wind up getting fired, ruining your own reputation, or damaging an important relationship that has consequences for the future.

In the short-term, you feel better because you expressed your dissatisfaction, but now imagine that despite that annoying cubicle behavior, your co-worker gets a big promotion. They are now your supervisor. Will they be tempted to spend the first several months in their new position punishing you for handling the cubicle behavior conversation incorrectly? Can you come up with a better way to handle this situation? Please have a conversation about some alternatives this harmful verbal altercation. How could this workplace situation have been handled differently by managing impulsivity? Can you create win-win solution for everyone?



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Dr. Tull shares some wisdom about dealing with impulsivity that I wanted to share with you.
Dr. Tull recommends:

- **Distract yourself:** Often the urge to do something impulsive passes quickly. Regroup and focus your attention on a distraction. Often the urge will pass.
- **Replace your impulsive behavior with a healthy one:** If you are having an impulsive urge to interrupt others, work on impulse control and focus on listening to the other person and taking turns participating in the conversation.
- **Identify the long-term consequences of your behavior:** Don't focus on the immediate gratification of impulsive behavior. Instead focus on how that impulsivity is going to impact you and others in the long-term. Ask yourself:
 - How am I going to feel about this action tomorrow?
 - How is sending that email with this tone of voice going to impact my relationship with the email recipient next week?
 - How will communicating that message in this way impact my future in this organization in 6 months?

This is just a brief synopsis of some information about impulsivity. This Habit of the Mind is particularly important given the fact that each of us possesses the ability to act impulsively and post pictures of ourselves in compromising situations, email our whole organization in seconds, say things in an inelegant moment that are captured by smart phones and go instantly viral. Examples of individuals without this Habit of the Mind are all around us: Brett Favre, Anthony Weiner, Edward Snowden, and scores of others come to mind. The need for workers to demonstrate the ability to manage impulsivity has never been a more important Habit of the Mind to cultivate.

Please join me and attend to the other videos in this series. Thank you for your time and attention.

Have a great day and Go Pokes!

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