

The Referee

Inhibition and behavioural regulation

About The Referee:

The Referee helps you stop, start and control what you say and do. They watch what is going on in your brain and lets the right actions through – and blows the whistle when you need to pause. They help you wait your turn, stops you from interrupting. They remind you to think before you act. When your Referee is doing a good job, you're the boss of your actions – not just doing the first thing that pops into your head. They are not there to spoil your fun. They are there to help you play fair, stay safe, and make choices you'll feel proud of.

When your Referee is off duty

If your Referee gets tired and can't blow the whistle on time, you might:

- Do things too quickly – acting before you've had time to think
- Grab or move on too soon – before it is really your turn
- Jump into a job without working out how to do it first
- Find it hard to wait your turn
- Say the first thing that pops into your head, without checking if you want to say it out loud
- Talk over people, or keep talking when someone else is speaking
- Struggle to stop doing something, even when you know you should
- Get into trouble for things you didn't mean to do
- Do something and straight away think "I wish I hadn't done that"
- Feel like you're watching yourself from the outside, but can't press pause

What you can do to help your Referee

- Practice "Stop, Think, Go". When you're about to do something, try this:
 - Stop – pause, like when you're about to cross the road
 - Think – what's happening? What could you do?
 - Go – choose the best thing and do it
- Stop, Think, Go can be tricky, so it's ok to ask people to remind you.
- Get enough sleep. When you're tired, it's harder for your referee to blow the whistle in time
- Stay calm. If you're upset, angry or super-excited it's harder to stop yourself. Find things that help you feel calm, like listening to music, drawing, or taking deep breaths
- Own up if it goes wrong. If you do something and realise it wasn't the best choice, say so. People often understand if you explain your Referee was "off duty"
- Ask for help. If you're finding it hard to stop and think, tell someone so they can help you
- If you know something will be tricky for your Referee, let someone know before it happens.

Make sure the person is ready to learn these strategies. Remember, not every strategy works for everyone. When unsure, focus on what **you** can do to support the person

What other people can do to help your Referee

Teaching Skills

- Help them to practice “Stop, Think, Go” (or traffic lights – red, amber, green). Asks them to 1) Stop. 2) Think about what they are about to do, what will happen, what choices they have, etc. 3) Go – choose what they want to do. Regularly prompting them to use “Stop, Think, Go” will help them learn when they might need it, and so start to use it themselves.
- Practice things like “Stop, Think, Go” and taking turns in low-pressure settings

Adjust your approach

- Make sure people know **how** they ask for help. Remember – this might not be with words
- All young people will push boundaries on purpose. However, people who struggle with inhibition may also do this without thinking. It is important to work out when they are doing something on purpose, versus doing it without thinking. When they have done something without thinking, give them the chance to quickly walk it back, before using with consequences or reprimands. If they did it impulsively, they might quickly realise it was wrong and regret it. However, if they don't get a chance to take back their actions before getting told off, they may feel they have defend or deny what they did instead.
- Give gentle reminders before moments when stopping or waiting is important
- Make a secret code with visual or physical cues (like hand signals) as reminders to stop and think. This helps them remember, without drawing attention to them.
- Check in with them privately, rather than correct them in public.
- Remind them of what you would like them to do in different places. Remember, even with effort, they may still ‘forget themselves’ and act without thinking. Kind but firm reminders to adjust their behaviour when this happens gives them the chance to re-adjust
- Remember: impulsive behaviour isn’t always a choice – it’s a sign their Referee needs help

Changing the environment

- Use clear and consistent rules and routines, so their referee knows what to expect
- Find the common triggers for them to act without thinking, and avoid these where possible
- It will be easier for them to stop themselves when they are calm and well rested. It will be harder when they are over excited, angry, stressed, upset or tired.
- Knowing when and where they find stopping themselves easier/harder will help with planning. You can then work out what to do to help their Referee, before it gets too tricky.
- If they are unable to stop themselves in certain places, even with support, and their difficulty stopping themselves is having a negative effect on their relationships or self esteem, then it may be that they cannot manage that situation yet.
- Inhibition is tiring. If they’ve had to work hard to stop themselves for a while, remember that it will get harder for them. They will need a break.
- Inhibition can make it hard to keep going on tasks, to avoid ‘giving up’. Try and make tasks feel challenging yet do-able. Short regular breaks, and breaking tasks down into small chunks will help reduce the feeling of wanting to ‘give up’ or guess.

Make sure the person is ready to learn these strategies. Remember, not every strategy works for everyone. When unsure, focus on what **you** can do to support the person