

According to some researchers there are four aspects of inhibitory control that we need to have to manage daily interactions and circumstances.

1. Interruption of an on-going response
2. Impulsivity control
3. Inhibition of predominant response
4. Inhibition of external distractions

As a team of teachers and researchers we have been thinking about how to support children in managing these skills. This has involved 'in the moment' teaching when situations arise and also specific skills teaching at other calmer times. As part of this skills teaching we have used these four characters and your child may have already started to talk about these with you. These characters represent the four ideas stated above. The children have been asking to have pictures of these to use at home and so in response to this we have created this booklet to give you a bit more information about how you could use these characters and support your child in their personal, social and emotional development. Here are some examples of stories you might tell using these characters.



**Sammy Stop**

### The story of Sammy Stop

Simon Struggle loved having shiny things. He was like a magpie. Whenever he saw something he liked he would just take it and add it to his collection. One day, Simon saw Ned making a picture. Ned added some shiny sequins to his creation. Simon wanted them. All of them. Simon stretched out his hand towards Ned's picture when... down swung Sammy Stop! Sammy said, **"Stop! Think. Are you making a good choice?"** Sammy asked Simon "Who do they belong to? Who is using them?" Simon realised that taking them from Ned's picture was the wrong thing to do. He stopped, thought and decided to...



**Charlie Choice**

### The story of Charlie Choice

Sally Struggle was playing in the mud kitchen. She was making a lovely muddy soup. Her friend Fred had the same idea and he tipped all of the water into his saucepan. There was none left for Sally. Sally began to feel hot. She felt her hands tighten up into balls and her face scrunched up into her angry look. Her feelings grew and grew and grew until she thought she might burst, when... down swung Charlie Choice! Charlie said **"Stop. Think! You have a choice! There is another way"** Charlie said "I can see that you are feeling like you could burst. You have a choice. You could burst or you can think of another way. Go to the tap. Ask Ned to go to the tap. Change the recipe..." They thought through the options and then made a choice that kept everyone happy.



**Dani Driver**

### The story of Dani Driver

Dani Driver was driving along when s/he saw Sally Struggle. Sally was looking hot and bothered. Her face was red and her hands were scrunched. Sally was stood at the edge of the playground. She was glaring at the children on the bikes. She did not have one but her brother Simon did. It was not fair, she wanted a go on one. She wanted a go on one now! As Simon cycled past, Sally put out her arm ready to push him off of his bike, when... in zoomed Dani Driver who said, **"Stop. Think! You are about to make a wrong choice! Steer your brain to make a better choice!"** Sally considered her choices and made her brain change direction to make a better choice that ensured everyone was happy.

### The Story of Freddie Focus

Simon Struggle was about to write the best story he had ever written in his whole life. It was full of magic and mayhem. It was a lovely sunny day. The windows were open and outside Simon could hear some children playing. It sounded like fun. He wondered if he could listen and join in their game. He put down his pencil and started to peer out of the window, when... down swung Freddie Focus! Freddie said, **"Stop! Think! You have a choice! Focus your mind"** Freddie said "You can get distracted. You can listen to them or you can focus your mind on the main thing - your story!"



**Freddie Focus**

*These characters have purposely been designed to be either male or female. You can make up your own stories with these characters which fit the situations your child is struggling to manage.*

## **Vocabulary to use to help your child make good choices and calm down:**

Stop

Think

Calm

Breathe

I'm listening

Use your words

Let's go to your calm place (could be an actual place or in imagination, could be an activity they find calming e.g. colouring, music).

Explain what happened from your point of view

Think. What do you need to do?

You are heading towards a not helpful choice, you need to turn your behaviour around, ([link to Dani Driver](#)).

## **Ideas for skill development:**

Children can be trained to go to a physical place or to do a physical activity in the home/school when they recognise they are feeling close to an outburst or wrong choice.

Children might not be able to verbalise what has happened or how they are feeling when in proximity to an outburst or having just had an outburst. You might need them to calm down first before you discuss a situation. Be

aware that bringing up the situation again can 're-fuel' the original feelings.

They might need you to talk about what you see in them (i.e. feelings, physical reactions) or what has happened, as long as you know, 'I can see that you...' Inaccurate commentary about a situation could make it worse.

Use made up stories that teach about a character who is facing a similar situation to one that caused upset for your child. Sometimes it is easier to think about what someone else should do rather than themselves e.g. stories enclosed here about Sally and Simon Struggle. It will take time to move from KNOWING what choice should have been made after an event to MAKING the right choice and following it in the 'heat of the moment'.

Make them aware of how their body is feeling so they can begin to recognise the signs, e.g. clenched fists, feeling hot, tears, increased heart rate.

Affirm and praise when making a good choice and link back to this in a situation where a choice needs to be made to encourage the right choice and remind them that they can do it. You could keep a book or photos of 'successful moments/choices'.

Model sharing, turn taking, waiting for something you want in games with your child and talk out loud about your feelings and how you are managing yourself.



## Developing skills for self-regulation



## Executive function in young children

Supporting the development of  
inhibitory control.

Janice Harris

A booklet to enable the partnership between  
parents/carers and staff  
at Bluecoat Church of England  
Primary school  
to develop the learning of our children.