

As humans, the ability to control our impulses-or urges-helps distinguish us from other species and marks our psychological maturity. Most of us take our ability to think before we act for granted. But this isn't easy for people who have problems controlling their impulses.

People with an impulse control disorder (ICD) can't resist the urge to do something harmful to themselves or others. Impulse control disorders include addictions to alcohol or drugs, eating disorders, compulsive gambling, paraphilias sexual fantasies and behaviors involving non-human objects, suffering, humiliation or children, compulsive hair pulling, stealing, fire setting and intermittent explosive attacks of rage.

Some of these disorders, such as intermittent explosive disorder, kleptomania, pyromania, compulsive gambling and trichotillomania, are similar in terms of when they begin and how they progress. Usually, a person feels increasing tension or arousal before committing the act that characterizes the disorder. During the act, the person probably will feel pleasure, gratification or relief. Afterward, the person may blame himself or feel regret or guilt.

People with these disorders may or may not plan the acts, but the acts generally fulfill their immediate, conscious wishes. Most people, however, find their disorders highly distressing and feel a loss of control over their lives.

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/2007/what-are-impulse-control-disorders/>