



### ● START WITH A PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we bless You and thank You for creating us very good —body, mind, and soul— in Your image and likeness. As we learn today, fill us with Your love and keep us always secure in grace. Amen.

### ● TOPICS COVERED



**VIRTUE**  
Self-Control



**NEUROSCIENCE TOPIC**  
Self-Regulation



**SEL STRATEGY**  
Deep Breathing



**EMOTION**  
Excitement



**SAINT**  
St. Carlo Acutis

### ● LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Define the virtue of **self-control** and reflect on its practice in their lives.
- Understand how **self-regulation**, the limbic system, and prefrontal cortex impact their emotions and behaviors.
- Practice the social-emotional learning (SEL) strategy of **deep breathing**.
- Draw connections between the life of **St. Carlo Acutis** and their own lives, looking to him as an example of virtue and wholeness.



**Self-Control:**

- Joyful mastery over one’s passions (emotions/ feelings) and desires.

**Ways to Cultivate:**

- Listen to others without interrupting.
- Raising your hand to speak.
- Controlling your reactions when angry or frustrated.

**Prayer for Self-Control:**

Dear Jesus,  
 Thank You for all the desires you have given me, because they remind me of the desire in my heart that only you can fill! Help me to control my tongue when I am supposed to be silent; my hands when I am supposed to keep them to myself; my eyes when I am supposed to be focused on a particular person or thing; and my ears to listen to only those things I am supposed to hear.

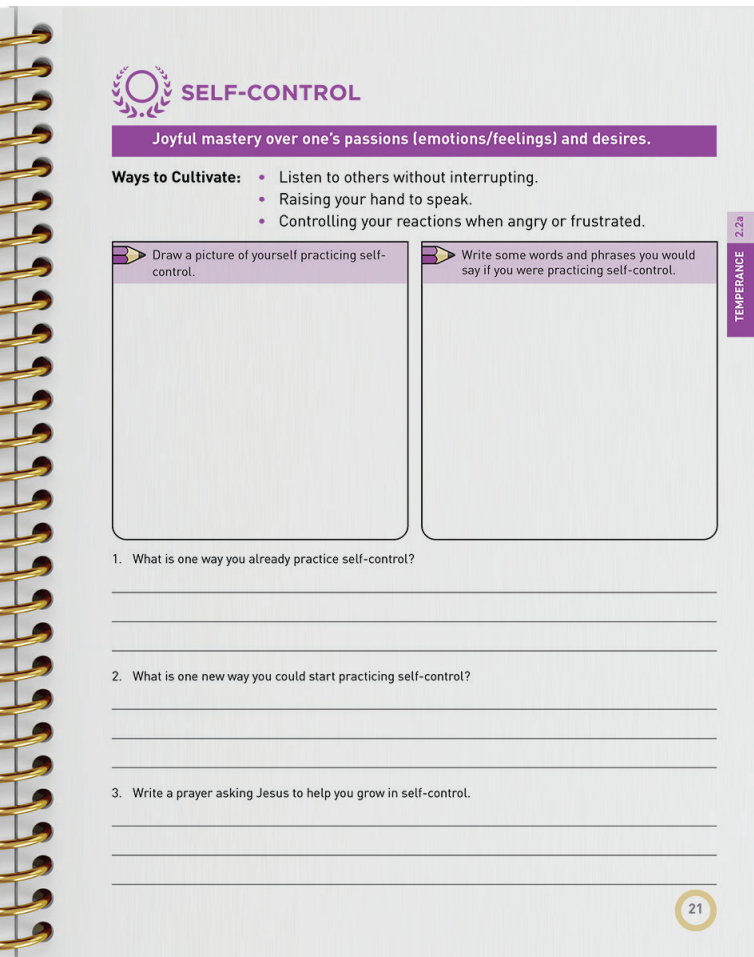
● **STUDENT ACTIVITY** (10 mins.)

**Materials needed:**


- Student Workbooks & Writing Utensils

**Teacher Directions:**

- 1 “Today, we’re going to learn about the virtue of self-control. Let’s begin with a prayer.”
  - Recite the prayer for self-control above.
- 2 Review the definition of self-control and ways to cultivate it.
  - See information above and on the top of student work sheet.
- 3 Instruct the students to take out their workbooks and a writing utensil and turn to page [x].
- 4 “At the top of your page, individually complete the two prompts. First, draw a picture of yourself practicing the virtue of self-control. Then, write some words and phrases you would say if you were practicing self-control.”
- 5 Allow the students time to complete the prompts.
- 6 Optional: Allow the students to share their responses.
- 7 “Now, let’s reflect on the virtue of self-control in our lives. Write down your answers to the following questions:
  - What is one way you already practice self-control?
  - What is one new way you could start practicing self-control?
  - Write a prayer asking Jesus to help you grow in self-control.”
- 8 Allow the students time to complete the prompts.
- 9 Optional: Allow the students to share their responses in small groups or as a whole class.



● **OPTIONAL VIRTUE VIDEO**  
 Self-Control Video: Self Control » Openlight Media (2:12 min.)





● ABOUT SELF-REGULATION

**Self-Regulation** is changing your behaviors, emotions, and thoughts on your own. Right now, this might be hard to do without help from adults—and that’s okay! You will gradually learn to regulate your own emotions soon. A very important aspect of self-regulation is self-control. The virtue of self-control is the joyful mastery over one’s passions and desires. It allows us to hold back or restrain ourselves when experiencing strong emotions, giving us a chance to respond instead of reacting. Have you ever felt overly excited or restless—to the point that you felt like you couldn’t focus on what you were doing? Self-regulation and self-control can allow you to return to a point of balance and use that energy for good!

There are two parts of your brain that are involved in self-regulation: the **Limbic System** and the **Prefrontal Cortex**.

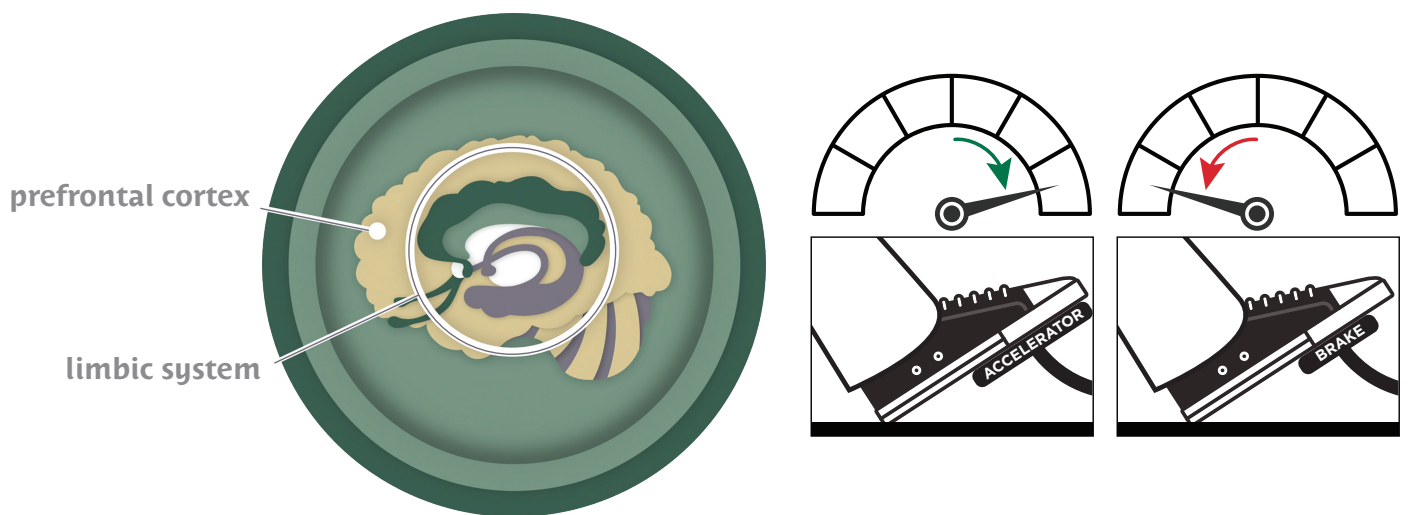
**The Limbic System**

- Helps us with our emotions, memory and connecting with other people
- The “gas pedal” of the brain
- Houses our emotional and impulse centers

**The Prefrontal Cortex**

- Controls decision-making, focuses attention, and allows us to learn and interpret information.
- The “braking system” of the brain
- Helps to inhibit the impulse control center of our brain

Your prefrontal cortex is currently underdeveloped and doesn’t become fully wired until the mid-twenties, while the emotional centers of your brain are very active and well-developed such that your emotions may feel out of control! If we don’t have a good braking system, our emotions and impulses can overwhelm us and cause us to make poor (or even sinful) choices. When our limbic system and prefrontal cortex work together, we can be in control of our emotions and behaviors—and make good decisions. However, this takes time to learn! Throughout our time together, we will learn skills and strategies that will help us recognize and regulate our emotions.





● **STUDENT ACTIVITY** (10 mins.)

**Materials needed:**

- Neuroscience Topic Video
- Student Workbooks
- Writing Utensils

**Teacher Directions:**

- 1 Begin with the prayer at the top of the page or another prayer of your choice.
- 2 "Today we're going to learn about self-regulation. Remember to thoughtfully listen as we will be reviewing the information after."
- 3 Play the neuroscience video: Self-Regulation.
- 4 Instruct the students to take out their workbooks and a writing utensil and turn to page [x].
- 5 "On your own, please complete the notes in your workbook by filling in the blanks using the word bank. Remember, not all words need to be used. After, we will review the answers together."
- 6 Allow time for the students to complete the activity.
- 7 Review the answers to the fill-in-the-blank activity by reading the sentences (with the blanks) and asking for volunteers to provide the correct answers. (See answer key)\_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Instruct the students to individually complete the prompts at the bottom of the page.
  - a. Read the prompts out loud if needed.
    - i. Do you think that your brain has a strong "braking system"? Why or why not?
    - ii. Draw or list out activities and/or strategies that might help you strengthen it.
- 9 Optional: Allow the students to share their responses in small groups or as a whole class.
- 10 "Remember, self-regulation might seem difficult now, but together, we will learn skills and strategies that will help us better control our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors."

**NEUROSCIENCE** **SELF-REGULATION**

**DIRECTIONS:** Fill in the blanks from the video.

**WORD BANK:**  
GAS PEDAL ALARM SYSTEM SELF-REGULATION  
BRAKING SYSTEM SELF-CONTROL MODERATION

**TEMPERANCE 2.2b**

prefrontal cortex  
limbic system

**SELF-REGULATION** \_\_\_\_\_ is changing your behaviors, emotions, and thoughts on your own.

A very important aspect of self-regulation is the virtue of **SELF-CONTROL** \_\_\_\_\_ or the joyful mastery over one's passions (emotions) and desires. It allows us to hold back or restrain ourselves when we're experiencing strong emotions - it gives us a chance to respond instead of react.

The Limbic System helps us with our emotions, memory and connecting with other people. It is the **GAS PEDAL** \_\_\_\_\_ of the brain.

The Prefrontal Cortex controls decision-making, focuses attention, and allows us to learn and interpret information. It is the **BRAKING SYSTEM** \_\_\_\_\_ of the brain.

**TALK IT OUT!**

What is the most important thing I learned today?

What was surprising? Confusing? Interesting?

What do I want to learn more about?

What questions do I still have?

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The strategy we are going to learn about is called **Deep Breathing**. This is an important and easy strategy for calming your nervous system anywhere you are.

One way to “trick” your limbic system (or gas pedal!) into slowing down before it gets out of control is deep breathing. This simple strategy helps calm the body by slowing your heart rate, lowering your blood pressure, and improving your focus. Your body then sends a signal back to the limbic system that everything is okay and that you are safe. This helps you feel less excited and more calm and peaceful.

**Let’s try it together!**

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Sit in a comfortable position. Relax your jaw and shoulders. Let your eyelids get heavy. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable. (Pause for at least 15 sec.)</p> |    | <p>Try to breathe a little more slowly and a little more deeply. (Pause)</p>                                      |    |
| <p>Pay attention to your breathing. Feel how your breath comes in and goes out. (Pause)</p>   |   | <p>If you feel your mind start to wonder, go back to focusing on your breath. (Allow for 1-2 min. of silence)</p> |   |
| <p>Put one hand on your stomach and one hand over your heart. Feel your stomach rise and fall with each breath. (Pause)</p>   |  | <p>Now slowly open your eyes, take a deep breath, and smile.</p>  |  |

Practice deep breathing every day. Practicing will help your brain get into the habit of deep breathing when faced with strong emotions and in situations that are stressful like before an exam, presentation, or a competition. This will help you learn to self-regulate!



● **STUDENT ACTIVITY** (10 mins.)

**Materials needed:**

- SEL Strategy Video
- Student Workbooks
- Writing Utensils

**Teacher Directions:**

- 1 Begin with the prayer at the top of the page or another prayer of your choice.
- 2 “Today we’re going to learn about the strategy Deep Breathing. Remember to thoughtfully listen as we will be reviewing the information after.”
- 3 Play the strategy video: Deep Breathing.
- 4 Instruct the students to take out their workbooks and a writing utensil and turn to page [x].
- 5 “Now that we practiced deep breathing, let’s reflect on what we learned.”
- 6 Instruct the students to individually complete the reflection questions at the bottom of the page.
  - a. Read the questions out loud if needed.
    - i. In what ways can deep breathing help your brain’s “gas pedal” from taking over?
    - ii. How will you use this strategy next time you feel overwhelmed by your emotions?
- 7 Optional: Allow the students to share their responses in small groups or as a whole class.
- 8 “Remember, practicing deep breathing will help your brain get into the habit of slowing down when faced with strong emotions or stressful situations. This will help you learn to self-regulate!”

**STRATEGY**

**DEEP BREATHING**

The strategy we are going to learn about is called Deep Breathing. This is an important and easy strategy for calming your nervous system anywhere you are. **LET’S TRY IT TOGETHER!**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Sit in a comfortable position. Relax your jaw and shoulders. Let your eyelids get heavy. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable.</p> |  |
| <p>Try to breathe a little more slowly and a little more deeply.</p>   |  |
| <p>Pay attention to your breathing. Feel how your breath comes in and goes out.</p>  |  |
| <p>If you feel your mind start to wander, go back to focusing on your breath.</p>  |  |
| <p>Put one hand on your stomach and one hand over your heart. Feel your stomach rise and fall with each breath.</p>                      |  |
| <p>Now slowly open your eyes, take a deep breath, and smile.</p>   |  |

1. In what ways can deep breathing help your brain’s “gas pedal” from taking over?

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2. How will you use this strategy next time you feel overwhelmed by your emotions?

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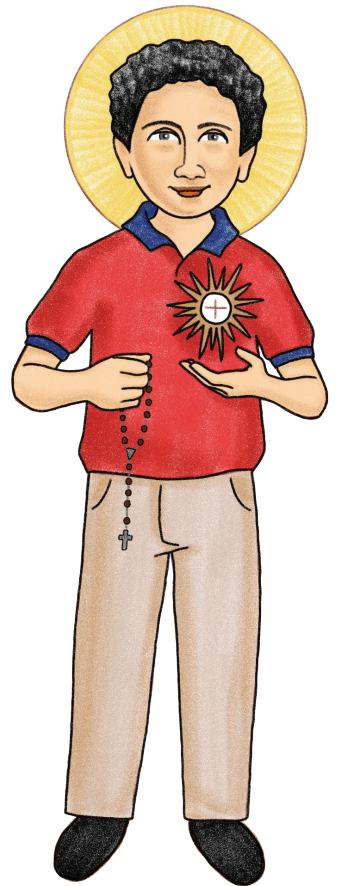


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If you feel **excited**, **St. Carlo Acutis** can help! As you listen to his life story, see how Carlo responded to excitement with the virtue of **self-control**. Carlo was a kid excited about everything: soccer, comics, movies, computer programming, video games. But when he was seven, he found one thing that excited him more than anything else: the holy Eucharist. Even though his family wasn't very religious, Carlo could not get enough once he received Jesus in his First Holy Communion. He started attending Mass to receive Jesus in the Eucharist daily. Carlo became fascinated by stories of Eucharistic miracles and even made a website to teach others about them! Whenever he was out with his family, he couldn't pass by a Church without rushing in to visit his best friend, Jesus. He once told his mom that he thought it was strange that he saw long lines of people waiting to get into a concert or a football game, but not in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Carlo didn't stop being excited about all the other fun things in life. But he practiced self-control so that they never took the place of Jesus for him. For example, he still liked video games a lot, but he limited himself to playing them for one hour a week. He used his excitement about computer programming to teach others about Jesus through his website. Self-control gave Carlo balance so that he could enjoy all the fun things in life without them taking over. St. Carlo is an outstanding example of excitement balanced by self-control. If you feel excited, great! Ask St. Carlo Acutis to help you practice self-control so that you can achieve your goals and stay focused on Jesus. St. Carlo Acutis






**STUDENT ACTIVITY** (10 mins.)

**Materials needed:**

- Saint Story Audio
- Student Workbooks
- Writing Utensils

**Teacher Directions:**

- 1 Instruct the students to take out their workbooks and a writing utensil and turn to page [x].
- 2 "Today we're going to learn about St. Carlo Acutis. Does anyone know anything about this saint?" Allow the students to respond.
- 3 "St. Carlo Acutis is a very new saint. He was a normal kid who loved playing video games, soccer, and computers. Carlo often felt excited. But he used the virtue of self-control to help him manage his excitement."
- 4 "As we listen to today's saint story, trace, color, or draw in the space on your page."
- 5 Play saint story audio.
- 6 "Now let's reflect on St. Carlo Acutis's life by answering the following questions at the bottom of your page. First, write down ways that St. Carlo experienced excitement and responded with self-control. Then, write down how you will be more like him this week."
- 7 Allow the students time to complete the prompts.
- 8 Optional: Allow the students to share their responses in small groups or as a whole class.

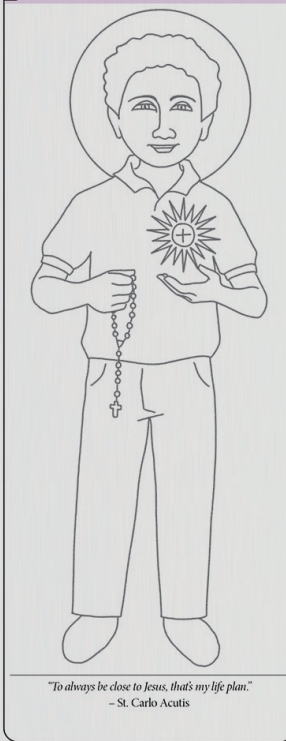


SAINT

**ST. CARLO ACUTIS**

Trace, color, or draw as you listen to the story.

TEMPERANCE 2,24



"To always be close to Jesus, that's my life plan."  
- St. Carlo Acutis

1. Write down the ways that St. Carlo Acutis experienced feeling excited and responded with self-control.
2. How will you be more like St. Carlo Acutis this week?





## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL) DAY 5



## VIRTUE

### Cultivating the Virtues Online Course

For Elementary Students



Requires Openlight Media Plus Subscription

### Daily Virtue Meditations

For Elementary Students



Requires Openlight Media Plus Subscription

### Interactive Virtue Tree

For Educators and Students



### Learn the Virtue Online Course

For Adults and Educators



Requires Openlight Media Plus Subscription

### Virtue Explorer Page

For Educators and Students



Requires Openlight Media Plus Subscription



## NEUROSCIENCE

### Self-Regulation Skills: Why They Are Fundamental



Time stamp (2:22)

### 2-Minute Neuroscience: Limbic System



Time stamp (1:51)

### What is Self-Regulation?



Time stamp (3:07)



## SEL STRATEGIES

Review and practice the following alternative strategies:

- **Focused Sound Breathing:** Focus on a sound as you slow your breathing, gently inhaling and slowly exhaling. (*Connections Over Compliance*, p. 185)
- **Feeling Your Breath:** Place your fingers just an inch or two in front of your mouth. As you breathe in through your nose, inhale a shallow breath and feel the air, then exhale through your mouth. Now breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth as you blow up your belly with a deep diaphragm breath. Feel how much warmer this air is against your fingers. (*Connections Over Compliance*, p. 186)
- **Rectangle Breathing:** Trace a rectangle with your finger, inhaling as you trace the short side and exhaling as you trace the long side. (*Connections Over Compliance*, p. 189)



## SAINT

### Interactive Saint Calendar

For Educators and Students



Requires Openlight Media Plus Subscription

### Saint Cards

For Elementary Students



Physical product that can be purchased on Openlight Media

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## REFERENCES

*Openlight Media Resources*

*Educator's Guide: Living a Virtuous Life*  
Self-Control, pp. 129

*Raised in Grace: The Beauty of Gradualness*  
Regulation, p 10

*Virtue Field Guide*  
Self-Control, pp. 214-217

*Other*

*180 Days of Applied Educational Neuroscience* by Lori L. Desautels, Ph.D.  
Emotional Regulation, Days 154-156

*Connections Over Compliance: Rewiring Our Perceptions of Discipline* by Lori L. Desautels, Ph.D.  
Focused Sound Breathing, p. 185  
Feeling Your Breath, p. 186  
Rectangle Breathing, p. 189

*Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology* by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.  
Limbic Area, Chapter 13 (pp. 1-5)  
Cortex, Chapter 14 (pp. 1-6)

*The Yes Brain* by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. & Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.  
Balance and the Green Zone, pp. 32-38