Road rage, anger management, impulse buying, credit card dept. These are all signs of poor impulse control.

Planning, prioritizing, calmness and organization. These are all signs of good management of impulsivity.

What we find is that successful people are able to manage their impulses well. They are able to set goals, prioritize, and keep their plans on track. They tend to be thoughtful and considerate in their actions, rather than rash and hurried.

It's interesting to note that this Habit was originally called "Reduce Impulsivity". As we learn more about how successful people engaged with this Habit, its name was changed to "Manage Impulsivity". Successful people aren't necessarily the ones that are going around quietly managing themselves, ticking off their goals as they go, being very straight... and let’s face it, boring! There are times when we should rein in our impulses and times when we should run with our impulses, and successful person knows which is which.

Steven Covey refers to this disposition when he discusses what he calls the gap between stimulus and response. In his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* he describes two types of people: reactive people and proactive people. Proactive people manage their impulsivity well in order to create a gap between the stimuli they encounter and their response. In this gap proactive people exercise their independent will, their conscience, their imagination and their self-awareness to choose how they respond. Covey describes the ability to be proactive as the first of his 7 Habits of Highly Successful People.

Reactive people tend to jump to conclusions and are the victims of their environment. On the other hand proactive people take time to consider; they manage their impulses and make good choices about the best course of action. In this short video see if you can identify if the people involved are being proactive (managing their impulsivity well) or reactive (managing their impulsivity poorly).

Covey also sheds light on another aspect of this Habit of Mind when he discusses the types of tasks proactive people spend most of their time doing. People who manage their impulsivity well tend to spend more time on tasks that are important but not necessarily urgent – what he describes as Q2 tasks. They are able to prioritize well and subordinate the less important and perhaps more urgent tasks in order to focus their attention on the most important, but sometimes less pressing, tasks.

Managing Impulsivity also relates to the ability to delay gratification, not to take the first reward that comes our way, but to hold out for our ultimate goal. This has been shown to have significant correlations to success. In a similar way this habit relates to the ability to withhold judgment before reaching a conclusion. A person who is able to manage their impulsivity well will take the time to consider alternatives, gather information and come to a considered conclusion.