



# Keeping impulses in check

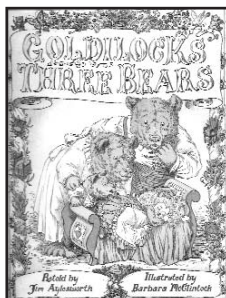
*These books will help adults and children talk about the hard job of learning to think ahead before acting on impulse*

BY BEN PETERSON

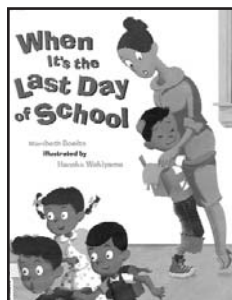
**E**ven with the best of intentions, children can find themselves in trouble when they act impulsively. So parents and teachers use diverse methods to try to teach the importance of thinking before acting.

Reading and discussing stories can be an effective way of communicating this lesson. The following children's books provide examples, both familiar and fantastical, of the importance of impulse control—and how difficult it can sometimes be.

**GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS**, story retold by Jim Aylesworth, illustrations by Barbara McClintock. Goldilocks sometimes forgets to do things her mother tells her to do—and forgets to avoid the things that her mother tells her *not* to do. Though her mother warns her not to go into the woods, Goldilocks forgets. She impulsively follows a butterfly and a bird and is soon at the forest home of three bears. Without thinking, she enters, tries their porridge, sits in their chairs, and naps in their beds. When the bears come home, she is forced to escape. Afterwards she may still forget to do the things her mother tells her to do, but Goldilocks tries never to forget the things her mother tells her not to do. This familiar folktale reminds children of the dangers of not thinking through their actions and of forgetting the rules. Ages four to seven. (Scholastic Press, 2003)

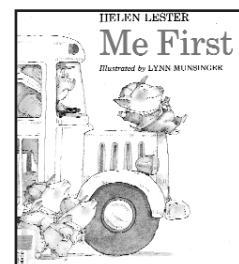


**WHEN IT'S THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL**, story by Maribeth Boelts, illustrations by Hanako Wakiyama. Before his last day of school, James plans on doing right all the things he may have impulsively done wrong during the year. He'll pay attention in class; he won't burp and talk at the same time; and he won't talk during silent reading. He plans to behave perfectly until the last day of school ends, then summer will start and he can "explode." Young readers will sympathize with



James' intentions and relate to his plight. Ages five to seven. (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004)

**ME FIRST**, story by Helen Lester, illustrations by Lynn M. Munsinger. Pinkerton is a plump, pink, and pushy pig who always wants to be first. Without thinking he rushes to be in front, "even if it meant bouncing off bellies, stepping on snouts, or tying tails." But when his scout troop goes to the beach and his impulsive "me first" behavior has unfavorable consequences, Pinkerton learns a valuable lesson. Lester and Munsinger's charming, comical picture book provides a great example of the danger in acting too impulsively. Ages four to seven. (Walter Lorraine Books, 1995)



**WATCH OUT!**, story and illustrations by Jan Fearnly. Wilf, the little brown mouse, is "full of busy." He loves to run, skip, climb, play, and jump. He is so busy that sometimes he forgets to listen to his mother and gets into trouble. Though Wilf doesn't always do the right thing, he wants to make his mother happy and, at the end of the day, he busily makes her a card and supper. When he gives them to her, she gets so excited that she forgets to listen. Fearnly's story helps to show that, though being "full of busy" can be frustrating to others, it does not always have bad intent and can happen to anyone. Ages four to seven. (Candlewick Press, 2004)

**IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE**, story by Joffe Numeroff, illustrations by Felicia Bond. In this popular picture book for young children, a boy becomes exhausted trying to fulfill the impulsive requests of a mouse. Once he gives the mouse a cookie, the mouse soon wants milk, then a straw, then a napkin, and on and on until he's back to wanting a cookie. While not taking it too seriously, this comic story shows its young readers the difficulty of fulfilling the spontaneous desires of impulsiveness. Ages three to six. (Laura Geringer Books, 1985)