

Strength Model of Self-regulation

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Self-control is the effortful, deliberate form of self-regulation. It depends on a limited resource (akin to the folk notion of willpower and character strength). The analogy of self-control resource to a muscle is confirmed with several sets of findings. First, like a tired muscle, self-control performs relatively poorly when it has recently been exerted, even in a wholly different context. Second, like athletes conserving their strength when some has been expended, self-controllers tend to hold back on exerting self-control when they anticipate further demands. Third, just as regular exercise gradually improves physical stamina, self-control exercises can gradually make people able to sustain self-control exertions better. One important aspect of self-regulatory resources is the level of glucose in the bloodstream, which produces the fuel for brain activity and which appears to be closely tied to acts of self-control.

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