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Self-Control Predicts Better Life

High Self-Control Predicts Good Adjustment, Less Pathology, Better Grades, and Interpersonal Success



Principle

Self-Control is associated with a lot of varied, positive life outcomes.

Quote

“Self-control as measured by our scale is linked to beneficial, positive outcomes across remarkably diverse domains.”

So What - Application

If self-control is associated with a lot of varied positive life outcomes, you'd think you would want to develop it.

However, this paper gives no strategies for how to actually strengthen or train your own self-control.

If you want to find out how your own or someone else's self-control is, you could use the scale they developed as a good measure of self-control.

The Research Story

Three researchers at George Mason and Case Western Reserve Universities studied self-control in a variety of circumstances. They studied how well college students' self-control related to their grades, alcohol use, eating disorder symptoms, general psychological adjustment, empathy, relationship quality, attachment, proneness to guilt (useful) versus shame (harmful), and personality traits of conscientiousness and perfectionism. That's a lot of measures.

They had two purposes: to find out the benefits of self-control and to create a better measure of self-control. To do this they did two studies. Study 1 had 351 undergrads take a bunch of assessments and 93 questions on the Self-Control Scale. They did some statistics to figure out which questions were best and some other statistics to figure out what self-control was good for.

Then they narrowed the questions down to 36 questions and had 255 undergrads take the new shorter Self-Control Scale along with a bunch of other assessments to find out if their questions were valid and reliable and to see what else self-control was good for.

They ended up with a valid, reliable questionnaire that measures self-control. They also found the following benefits to having high self-control:

- better GPAs
- fewer alcohol problem
- less disordered eating
- better psychological adjustment
- better self-esteem
- more conscientious
- more emotionally stable
- less perfectionism
- better family relationships (goes both ways)
- securely attached (goes both ways)
- more empathy (without getting sucked in)
- handled their anger better
- less shame (which can be toxic)
- more guilt, which leads to taking responsibility for transgressions

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