SELF-REGULATION

versus self-control

Purpose

The practice of Self–Reg draws a fundamental distinction between self–regulation and self–control.

Self–regulation seeks to identify and reduce the causes of problems in mood, thought, and behaviour.

Self–regulation is always searching for hidden stressors.

Self–control seeks to inhibit or manage such problems only when they arise.

Self–control looks only at surface behaviours.

Origins

The roots of the distinction between self–regulation and self–control are remarkably ancient, tracing all the way back to Hippocrates and Plato.

Hippocratic physicians turned to cupping, diet, exercise, and emetics to restore “humoral balance” in the blood.

Educators and religious authorities worked on character–building to strengthen “willpower”.

At the beginning of the 20th century, both theories gave birth to a science. Hippocratic methods evolved into physiology, while “willpower”–based methods influenced modern day Behaviourism.

Physiology looks at neurobiological systems that maintain a balance between energy expenditure and restoration.

Self–regulation capitalizes on recent advances in the science of stress management.

Behaviourism, on the other hand, looks for ways to contain the surface effects of an imbalance.

Self–control looks at age–old methods of punishment and reward to manage behaviour.

Methods

Both self–regulation and self–control seek to achieve “effortful control”, or the ability to voluntary manage attention and inhibit or activate behaviours in response to external stimuli.

Self–Reg seeks to reduce the effort required to reach effortful control.

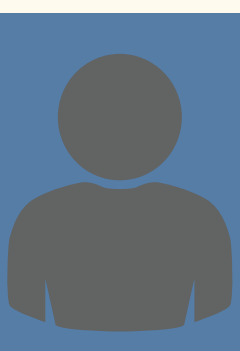
Self–regulation is about looking non–judgmentally at one’s impulses, worries, and fixations.

Self–control encourages battling “weaknesses” to exercise effortful control.

Self–control is about being judged, by oneself as much as by others.

Focus

Self–regulation looks at the social dimension.



Self–control focuses solely on the individual.

Self–regulation makes self–control possible, not the other way around.

Self–Regulation Infographic | Self–Regulation vs. Self–Control | May 2016

This resource was developed by Dr. Stuart Shaker and The MEHRIT Centre, as part of a series of printable resources. It is freely available for downloading, printing, and sharing in support of creating safe and caring environments for children and youth. Download this resource and more at **www.self–reg.ca**.