

# SELF-CONTROL

An Overview

- ▶ Capacity for foregoing immediate gratification in order to secure long term gains (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999)
- ▶ Overriding one action tendency in order to attain another goal (Carver & Scheier, 1982)
- ▶ One's ability to influence, modify, or alter his or her own behavior (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996)

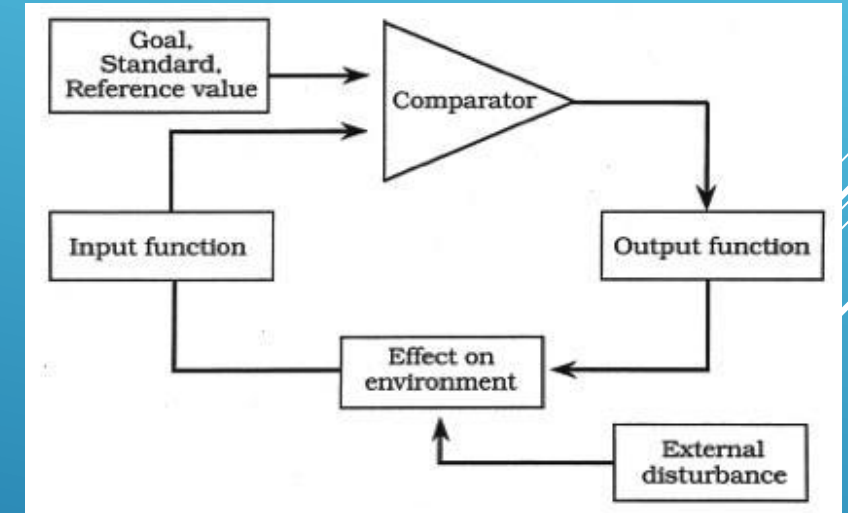
## DEFINITIONS OF SELF-CONTROL

## ▶ Structural Model of the Psyche

- ▶ Id – contains human's basic, instinctual, animalistic drives. Focuses on survival and reproduction
- ▶ Super-ego – Internalization of societal rules, internal standards, "ought to"
- ▶ Ego – Balance between satisfying the Id and operating within the Super-ego

# SIGMUND FREUD

- ▶ Carver and Scheier's Control Theory (1982)
  - ▶ Self-control operates as a negative, or discrepancy-reducing, feedback loop
  - ▶ Requires:
    - ▶ Sensing present condition
    - ▶ Evaluation of discrepancy between present and referent standard
    - ▶ Change behavior to meet standard, if merited



Carver & Scheier, 2002

# EARLY RESEARCH

- ▶ Mischel, Shoda, and Peak's Marshmallow Test (1988)
  - ▶ Delay of gratification task
  - ▶ Small immediate reward vs. larger delayed reward
  - ▶ Children who performed better at delaying gratification had better outcomes:
    - ▶ Higher pursuit of long-term goals
    - ▶ Less risky drug use
    - ▶ Higher education levels
    - ▶ Lower body mass index

## EARLY RESEARCH

- ▶ Three ingredients to self-control (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996)
  - ▶ Standards
  - ▶ Monitoring
  - ▶ Operational strength
- ▶ Resource (ego) depletion (Baumeister et al., 1998)
  - ▶ Ability of a person to exert self-control dependent on pool of SC resources.
  - ▶ Once exerted, fewer resources available for SC lead to failure
  - ▶ Participants resisting chocolate gave up faster than those resisting radishes

## RESOURCE (EGO) DEPLETION MODEL

- ▶ Self-control can be improved over time (Muraven, et al., 1999)
  - ▶ Regularly practicing self-control builds upon resources like a muscle
  - ▶ Participants using left-hand, not swearing for two weeks showed less depletion susceptibility
- ▶ Spheres of control (Baumeister et al., 1994)
  - ▶ Self-control extends to myriad aspects of one's life
  - ▶ Behavior, attention, emotion, executive functioning
  - ▶ Exertion in one area will deplete resources available for another

## RESOURCE (EGO) DEPLETION MODEL

- ▶ Internal Motivation

- ▶ “I won’t punch that person because hitting them would be wrong”

- ▶ External Motivation

- ▶ “I won’t punch that person because they’ll probably tell and I’ll end up in jail”

INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL