

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

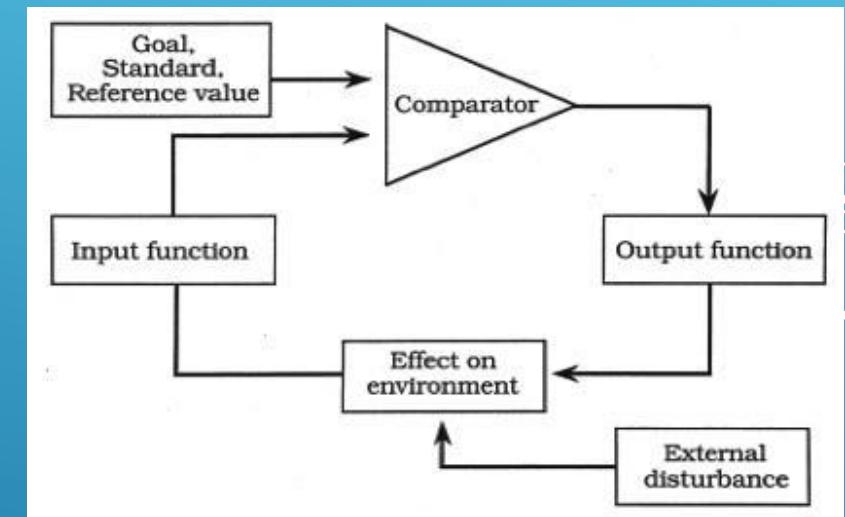


► Structural Model of the Psyche

- 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

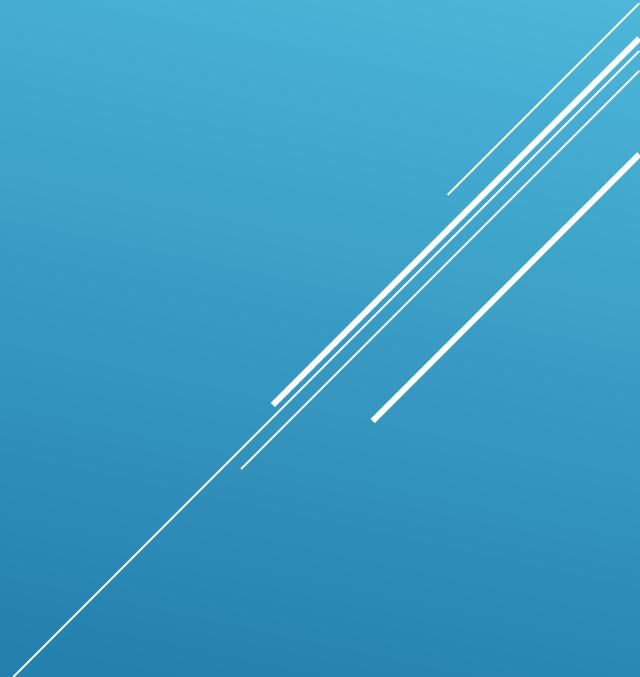
- ▶ Three ingredients to self-control (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996)
 - ▶ Standards
 - ▶ Monitoring
 - ▶ Operational strength
- ▶ Resource (ego) depletion (Baumeister et al., 1998)
 - ▶ Ability of a person to exert self-control dependent on pool of SC resources.
 - ▶ Once exerted, fewer resources available 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

