

What You Need to Know.

by Dr. Stuart Shanker

Self-Regulation: 7 Myths Of Self-Reg

Myth 1: Scientists all mean the same thing when they talk about “self-regulation.”

In fact, Dr. Jeremy Burman documented 447 different uses of “self-regulation” in the scientific literature, which he grouped together into six distinct “concept-families.”

Myth 2: “Self-regulation” is just another term for “self-control.”

Self-regulation is concerned with how we manage stress and energy, not inhibiting the impulses that arise from excessive stress.

Myth 3: Self-Reg provides a more effective way to manage behavior than traditional behaviorist approaches.

Self-reg is about understanding, not managing behavior, and ameliorating the conditions that result in challenging behaviors.

Myth 4: A child’s ability to self-regulate, like intelligence, is genetically determined.

Neither is “genetic,” although biological issues can make it more challenging for some children to learn how to manage the stress in their lives.

Myth 5: Self-regulation is set in the early years of life.

Excessive stress in the early years can have a strong effect on a child’s “stress reactivity,” but there is never a point where it is too late to learn how to self-regulate.

Myth 6: Self-regulation is concerned solely with handling powerful negative emotions (e.g., anger, fear).

Self-regulation is as much about up regulating positive emotions (e.g., interest, love, happiness) as down-regulating negative emotions.

Myth 7: Self-regulation promotes permissive parenting

Self-regulation is about recognizing and reducing stressors, and structure plays an important role in this regard. Permissive parenting has, in fact, been shown to be as great a stress for children as authoritarian parenting.

Learn more

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