



# THE PARADOX OF SELF-CONTROL

Throughout history we have heard thousands of stories about successful people achieving difficult goals or failing to reach them.

**EVERY SINGLE YEAR AMERICANS** have New Year's resolutions. If you visit [www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov), you can find a list of the most popular New Year's resolutions Americans make. On that list you probably won't be surprised to find the following:

- Lose Weight • Exercise More
- Quit Smoking • Improve Finances

As we all know there is a high failure rate to achieve these goals, but why? You will hear comments such a lack of willpower or self-control. And by self-control, I mean that inner strength that successfully helps you avoid temptations, distractions, and guides your actions in pursuit of a goal. Celebrities who have spoken openly about their many attempts to lose weight and keep it off know exactly what needs to happen and what they need to do but they still fail. The paradox of self-control turns out to be that even successful people with a lot of self-control sometimes run out of it.

According to Heidi Grant Halvorson, PhD., in her book "Succeed", she explains that psychologists have come to understand that the capacity for self-control is very much like a muscle. Self-control can vary in its strength, not only from person to person, but from moment to moment. Even well-developed muscles sometimes get tired, and so too does your self-control muscle.

So, what can do you about it? Certainly, now that you know what self-control is, you can plan accordingly. Since we have used the analogy that self-control is like a muscle, then you can rest for a while, and you will get your strength back. Self-control is about inhibiting strong impulses. However, if you want to reduce the frequency and intensity of strong impulses then focus on the strength of self-regulation. In fact, self-regulation is what makes self-control possible, or, in many cases, unnecessary.

In the book, *The Power of Character Strengths*, authored by Ryan Niemiec, PsyD. He explains that there is research that supports the benefits of the strength of self-regulation:



- People with high self-control report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, are better able to control anger, and generally get along better with people.
- People skilled at self-regulation are in charge of their emotions rather than the other way around.
- Self-regulation is associated with achieving goals and being successful in many endeavors, including academic, athletic, and work performance.
- Self-regulation is linked with better personal adjustment, such as having fewer physical and psychological problems and having a greater sense of self-acceptance and self-esteem in relationships.
- Self-control helps in the prevention and management of addictions.

Self-control is neither innate nor unchangeable. It is learned, developed, and made stronger (or weaker) over time. Recent research has shown that engaging in daily activities such as exercising, meditating, keeping track of your finances or what you are eating, even just remembering to sit up straight every time you think of it can help you develop your overall self-control capacity.

The strength of self-regulation relates to more health behaviors than any other strength. Imagine managing your emotions, exercising routines, eating habits, and even your attention levels today. How will self-regulation help you be more successful in life?

If you are interested in discovering your character strengths, such as self-regulation, visit the AlliancesHub website and take the free VIA Survey to get your strengths profile. ●



## ABOUT JOE

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