

DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Every day we have to make choices among different activities to achieve our goals. These choices get pretty hard when we want to do something which is pleasurable but, at the same time, may be harmful for our more fundamental goals. An example of a described dilemma is a situation when we have to perform mental labor (e.g. because we have an exam soon) and our friend is calling with an invitation for a coffee. On the one hand, we feel that we should stay home and learn but on the other, we have a desire to spend some time in a nice companion. Such a situation is a self-control conflict. Choosing an effortful option related to our distal goal is called self-control success.

The causes of self-control successes and failures have been investigated for decades by psychologists. For a long time a resource-based approach dominated in the field. Its proponents understand self-control as literally 'will power', which depends on a limited energy resource. A lot of experiments showed that exerting effort in two or more tasks in a sequence leads to weaker performance in the next tasks that require this power. However, another studies showed that this effect of self-control weakening is present only when people believe that self-control has energy-dependent nature. Proponents of more recent theories claim that self-control is underpinned by motivation and is an effect of an individual's decision whether to engage in a given activity or not. Therefore self-control attempts are not a result of changes in someone's energy reserve, but in their willingness to make them.

The main aim of this project is to verify the motivational conceptions. Questions that we want to answer are as follow: What does our willingness to engage mental effort depend on? What is the role of the feeling of fatigue in this process? Is fatigue a signal of the objective energetic loss or an emotion that prevents from stubborn fixation on one activity? Can we regulate the intensity of fatigue? Do changes in the attractiveness of effort and/or the intensity of fatigue influence control decisions? The answers to these questions will contribute to further scientific considerations as well as to the development of preventive and therapeutical interventions for people who have troubles with self-control and mental effort engagement.