

CREATIVE SELF-REGULATION

Taming creativity? On self-regulation of creative action

While pursuing a goal, we adopt various strategies of thinking and acting. Quite often, we have a pretty good understanding of what methods will work: what steps to take to achieve our ambition, and what to avoid. Even if we fail, we usually know what could be done in a different, better way. Importantly, there is a number of scientifically-based methods of a successful goal pursuit, which one can use when struggling with how to achieve the expected results. Indeed, scholars have already provided insights into effective strategies for saving money, quitting smoking, preparing to run a marathon, or improving academic performance. In short, as long as our goal is fairly well-defined, we have access to scientifically proven strategies that make it more likely to succeed.

However, human aspirations do not always manifest as clearly specified goals, which require an almost algorithmic-like approach to achieve them. Think about such activities as: writing a book, developing a graphical interface for a website, creating original recipe, crafting a video game dialogue, designing a garden, or inventing a new game for a child. All these challenges represent various forms of creative activity, which is characterized by the desire to obtain new, original and valuable results, yet—at the same time—induces uncertainty related to how these outcomes will actually look like. Crucially, mechanisms allowing one to pursue creative goals successfully are understudied. How do we act and what strategies do we use when facing creative challenges? Can we *tame creativity*: use strategic approaches to guide our actions and eventually, achieve more creative results?

In the planned research, our goal is to answer these questions by taking a detailed look at the self-regulatory mechanisms embedded in creative action. These mechanisms represent different ways of managing thinking, feeling, and acting processes while engaging in a creative activity. Presumably, using such strategies as planning, monitoring progress, managing emotions, or finding ways to stay motivated and focused makes creative activity more effective, thus leading to more creative outcomes. In the proposed project, we seek to explore two types of self-regulation mechanisms: cognitive (related to various thinking and meta-thinking processes) and non-cognitive (pertaining to how one controls emotions, attention, and motivation). Our research will cover creative activities differing in complexity and duration: from short creative thinking tasks to complex and longer-term creative projects. This will allow us to capture a wide range of self-regulation strategies, understand them better, and, consequently, provide a scientific basis for designing intervention programs that support effective self-regulation of creative activity.

Our research program involves six studies, including correlational, experimental and interventional study designs. All studies will be preregistered, with materials, codes, and data freely available according to Open Science principles. Our research will pursue the following goals: (1) to ensure a detailed understanding of how people guide their actions when striving for a creative goal (both short-term and over time); (2) to identify the most efficient strategies for doing so; (3) to capture the time-related dynamic of these mechanisms; (4) to explore whether and how the applied self-regulatory tactics and their effectiveness are impacted by individual differences (e.g., cognitive abilities); and finally, (5) to explore the possibilities of strengthening one's self-regulatory skills in a precisely designed intervention.