

# Self Control: The Overlooked Key to Wealth and Health

Experts often tell us that actions are a product of our genetics and environment. Happiness, health, and success correlate with biological or external realities. We can't escape them, but we must cope with them. Turns out, that's only part of the story. We have a secret weapon to take back ownership of our fates.

Self-control.

A [recent study](#) followed 1,000 children into adulthood. Researchers rated levels of self-control in the children and mapped those levels out on a gradient scale, with a higher number on the scale corresponding to a higher level of self-control. They found that the higher the child was on the gradient, the more likely they were to succeed in later life. In brief, the children who displayed more self-control were less likely to smoke and more likely to make good financial decisions, display better work ethic, engage in safer sex, and live longer as adults.

On the other hand, children who scored lower on the self-control gradient achieved lower success in later life:

“We observed a self-control gradient in which boys and girls with less self-control had worse health, less wealth, and more crime as adults than those with more self-control at every level of the distribution of self-control.”

The study also looked at siblings of these children, controlling for genetics and environment, and found that self-control levels distinguished their quality of life as well.

This might seem like a no-brainer, but the study concluded

with the following query:

“An interesting question is what would happen if we were able to intervene and improve children’s self-control. Would an increase in self-control predict better outcomes?”

Walter Mischel, a former researcher at Stanford, thinks we can do just that.

His infamous study, [The Stanford Marshmallow Experiment](#), gave children the option of delayed gratification or instant gratification. The longer they waited to eat a treat (which, in a cruel trick, the child selected themselves) the more of that treat they were given.

The study has been duplicated numerous times, such as in the video below. As you can see, the results are often amusing.

From his study, Mischel determined that self-control, otherwise known as willpower, is a cognitive skill we can identify and teach. Just as other studies confirmed, he saw that delayed gratification, controlled impulses, and the moderation of emotional expression served the children far into the future. His findings demonstrated the longer children waited for the treat, the higher their future SAT scores, the higher they functioned socially, the higher their sense of self-worth, and the more efficiently they achieved their goals.

In his book, [The Marshmallow Test: Why Self-Control is the Engine of Success](#), he presents the tools to acquire and cultivate the skill of willpower. Mischel suggests tactics including meaningful work, effective distractions, and perhaps most importantly stable adult influences to cultivate willpower in children. He sees self-control as a necessity to live a healthy, happy life in which one interacts maturely

with the outside world.

—

*Dear Readers,*

*Big Tech is suppressing our reach, refusing to let us advertise and squelching our ability to serve up a steady diet of truth and ideas. Help us fight back by [becoming a member](#) for just \$5 a month and then join the discussion on Parler [@CharlemagneInstitute](#) and Gab [@CharlemagneInstitute](#)!*

Image Credit:

Pixabay