

## **Self-Regulation vs Self-Control**

### **Purpose**

Self-regulation seeks to identify and reduce the causes of problems in mood, thought, and behaviour. It looks for hidden stressors.

Self-control seeks to inhibit or manage such problems only when they arise. It focuses on surface behaviours.

### **Origins**

The distinction between self-regulation and self-control traces back to ancient thinkers like Hippocrates and Plato.

Hippocratic approaches focused on restoring balance through physiological methods.

Willpower-based approaches emphasized character-building and behaviour control.

Modern physiology studies neurobiological systems that maintain balance, while behaviourism focuses on controlling observable behaviours.

### **Methods**

Both self-regulation and self-control aim for effortful control—the ability to manage attention and behaviour.

Self-regulation reduces the effort required by addressing underlying stress and viewing impulses non-judgmentally.

Self-control emphasizes overcoming weaknesses and often involves judgment of one's actions.

## **Focus**

Self-regulation considers the social environment and relationships.

Self-control focuses primarily on the individual.

## **Key Takeaway**

Self-regulation makes self-control possible, not the other way around.

Source: Adapted from Preschool Personality Infographic  
Dr. Deborah MacNamara - Excerpt from the book Rest, Play,  
Grow: Making Sense of Preschoolers (or anyone who acts  
like one)