

Link found between self-control in childhood and success later in life

5 January 2021, by Bob Yirka



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An international team of researchers has found a link between degree of self-control during childhood and success later on in life. In their paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the group describe their decades-long study of self-control in children and how it correlated with outcomes later on in life.

In this unique study, the researchers set out to learn more about the relationship between [self-control](#) and aging—specifically, they wanted to know how well [children](#) with self-control issues fare as they grow older—in this case, to age 45. To find out, they studied 1,037 children born between 1972 and 1973 (in New Zealand) who were included in the Dunedin Longitudinal Study as they aged from three to 11 years old. In so doing, they made self-control assessments of the children by talking to their parents, their teachers and to the children themselves. Each of the children were graded on characteristics such as impulsivity or how easily they grew frustrated when working on projects, and whether they followed through on such projects despite their frustration.

The researchers revisited the children decades

later, at age 45. Each was interviewed and tested in a variety of ways to learn about how their life had gone. The researchers found that those children with a high degree of self-control had, on average, aged better than those who had been identified as having low self-control. They also had fewer signs of brain aging and were in [better health](#). The researchers also found that the highly self-controlled group did better financially and socially. They also noted that IQ level and [social position](#) during childhood did not make any difference—children with self-control issues, on average, did less well in achieving standardized life goals than did those who demonstrated self-control as children.

The researchers suggest that more focus on teaching children with self-control issues to improve their control skills might result in a better quality of life.

More information: Leah S. Richmond-Rakerd et al. Childhood self-control forecasts the pace of midlife aging and preparedness for old age, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2021). [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2010211118](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2010211118)

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APA citation: Link found between self-control in childhood and success later in life (2021, January 5)
retrieved 25 April 2021 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-01-link-self-control-childhood-success-life.html>

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