

The Power of Self Control

Your parents were right. Learning to be a well-behaved child pays off in adulthood. To prove that prevailing wisdom, researchers in New Zealand tracked more than 1,000 people from toddlerhood into their early 30s. They found that the more self-control the subjects exhibited as youngsters, the healthier, wealthier, and happier they were as grown-ups. To measure self-control, says *WebMd.com*, the study authors interviewed children and the adults closest to them every two years to assess how they handled frustration, whether they frequently acted without thinking and whether they could stick to a given task until finished. A 3-year-old able to consistently complete puzzles, for instance, received higher marks than one who routinely became distracted, cried, or lashed out at other children. Follow-up studies at age 32 found that those who scored low as children were more likely to be overweight, drug dependent, and beset with credit problems. The study's authors say their findings are significant because, unlike other factors such as IQ and poverty, self-control can be taught over time. No matter what a child's circumstances, they conclude, "good parenting can improve self-control and improve life success."

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