

Dr. Mark Muraven

Psychology Department

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Improving Coping by Building Self-Control

Coping with stress should require self-control. Based on the predictions of the self-control strength model, practicing small self-control tasks regularly should lead to better self-control performance. The proposed research will test the relationship between coping and self-control in 350 undergraduates. In the laboratory phase, participants' physiological response to stress will be assessed after their self-control capacity has been diminished by depleting their self-control strength. Then these participants will carry electronic diaries to assess stress and coping as they go about their daily life. Participants who practice self-control should exhibit better coping in both the laboratory and field. Alternative models will be tested to establish the critical nature of self-control in coping and to demonstrate that it is possible to improve coping by strengthening self-control. The results may lead to applied research on helping soldiers deal with stresses, be better leaders and followers, and succeed in their missions.