

Self control a limited resource? Ego depletion theory gets a boost

For years, “ego depletion” has been a dominant theory in the study of self control. This is the intuitive idea that self control or willpower is a limited resource, such that the more you use up in one situation, the less you have left over to deploy in another.

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In a first [study](#) with 657 student participants, the first task involved either writing for five minutes about a recent trip (easy version) or writing about a recent trip without using the letters “A” or “N” (i.e. a more difficult version requiring more self control). The writing task was followed by one of two versions of the Stroop task: either participants had to name the ink colour of colour-denoting words, such as the word “red” written in blue ink, or the ink colour of emotional or neutral words. It takes a degree of self control to ignore the meaning of colour words, or emotional words, and focus on the ink colour.

Participants who completed the more difficult version of the writing task responded just as fast, but made more mistakes on the Stroop tasks than the control group. “This pattern represents unambiguous evidence for poorer attention control under ego depletion,” the researchers said.

Read full, original post: [“Strongest evidence yet” for ego depletion – the idea that self control is a limited resource](#)