

## **PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-DISCIPLINE**

Self-discipline can be considered to be the skill of self-control through exerting mental energy to overcome impulsiveness. Individuals with ADHD tend to have a deficit in self-discipline. They tend to give up easily on tasks, become quickly bored with tasks, display frequent impulsive behaviors, and have difficulty sustaining effort and attention. One quality that all of these difficulties have in common is poor impulse control.

It is my belief that self-discipline and self-control are skills. Some individuals are born with a great deal of talent for these skills and others are born with little talent in these areas. However, regardless of one's talent level, practice allows one to build skills.

Developing self-discipline can best be accomplished through a process called repetitive practice. Repetitive practice involves repeating a particular behavior or set of behaviors beyond the point of comfort. Most people have had the experience of jogging at some time in their life. When one begins to jog on the first day, one quickly develops a desire to stop. Overcoming that initial desire to stop running can be considered to be one instance of exerting self-discipline and self-control. In our first attempt to jog, we may exert this self-discipline a number of times. Over the course of months, we may exert this self-discipline thousands of times. The practice of exerting self-control to overcome impulses builds the individual's ability to generally self-control and self-discipline.

Individuals with ADHD tend to avoid activities that involve repetitive practice. They quickly begin to see such activities as "work" and "boring." Therefore, they tend to have less opportunity to practice self-control. They often get the "double whammy" of having low talent (for self-discipline) combined with absence of practice.

There are several lifestyle activities that I consider to incorporate the necessary element of repetitive practice in order to help individuals develop better self-control. Athletic activities such as martial arts, running, swimming and dance all include a great deal of repetitive practice. Taking music classes in which one spends a number of periods per week in practice also incorporates these features. Less directly, providing children with ongoing chores and responsibilities puts them in a position of repeating particular behaviors.

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