

CIBHS
EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE
SYMPOSIUM

*Moral Reasoning:
Expanding Benign
Confrontation &
Developing Empathy*

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KOHLBERG'S THEORY of MORAL DEVLEOPMENT

LAWRENCE KOHLBERG



Sociomoral Development and Delay

(Kohlberg, 1984)

- The development of more mature moral cognition through experiences of taking the perspectives of others.
- Thinking or cognition refers to basic patterns or “structures” of mature or immature thought.

Theory of Moral Development

- Discrete levels of moral development with two stages in each level.
- *“Moral reasoning”* is defined as judgments about right and wrong.
- The studies of moral reasoning are based on the use of moral dilemmas, or hypothetical situations in which people must make a difficult decision.

Stages of Moral Reasoning

Immature Moralities: Stages 1 and 2

Stage 1: Power

“Might makes right.”

- Morality is whatever big or powerful people say that you have to do.
- The Stage 1 individual doesn't understand the moral reasons for rules, has trouble with reciprocity if it requires taking more than one perspective at a time, and is best at taking the perspective of someone physically powerful.

Stages of Moral Reasoning

Immature Moralities: Stages 1 and 2

Stage 2: Deals

“You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.”

- Morality is an exchange of favors. (“I did this for you, so you’d better do that for me.”)
- Stage 2 individuals have trouble understanding the ideal of mutuality in a relationship. They also tend to be self-centered.

Stages of Moral Reasoning

Stage 3: Mutuality

“Treat others as you hope they would treat you.”

- In *mutual morality*, the relationship itself becomes a value. “*Trust*” and “*mutual caring*,” although intangible, are real and important.
- Stage 3 thinking can entail caring about the preciousness of human life. Care more about what others think of them.

Stages of Moral Reasoning

Stage 4:

“Are you contributing to society?”

- This morality involves interdependence and cooperation for the sake of society: Society can't make it if people don't respect the rights of others and follow through on their responsibilities.
- Stage 4 thinking is more of a supplement to stage 3.

- HEINZ dilemma



Beyond Kohlberg

Moral Reasoning and
Character Education as
part of Aggression
Replacement Training®



Kohlberg's Stage Theory

- Promotes the idea that moral reasoning proceeds through an invariant sequence of stages toward an understanding of what is just and fair.

- Research shows a well-established relationship between moral reasoning and delinquency.

Stams et al, 2006

- Did a nine year longitudinal study that confirmed the reciprocal relationship and delinquency – the higher the moral reasoning score, the lower the rate of delinquency.

Samuelson, 2007

- Demonstrated that a discussion based curriculum (like what is used in Aggression Replacement Training®) produced a statistically significant improvement in higher stage moral reasoning.

Snarry and Samuelson, 2008

Their meta-analysis of moral reasoning studies suggest:

1. Dilemma discussion is a useful method for moral development.
2. Real life dilemmas are more efficacious for moral development than are hypothetical dilemmas.

3. There is a zone of proximal development (+1) in which dilemma discussions advance moral development maximally.
4. Peers are the best teachers during dilemma discussion groups.

Just Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil

- Paul Bloom (2013) posits that few contemporary psychologists would endorse Kohlberg. He cites extensive research that says Kohlberg underestimated the moral sophistication of children and overestimated the moral sophistication of adults.

Study of What Babies Think About Reward and Punishment

- Five month old and eight month old babies were shown scenarios using puppets.
- One puppet helped open a box and one puppet slammed it shut.
- Then one puppet rolled a ball to two puppets, one rolled it back (nice), one ran away with it (mean).

- Five month old babies preferred nice puppets overall.
- Eight month old babies were more sophisticated: they preferred the puppet who was mean to the bad guy over the one who was nice to it. This showed that at some time after five months, babies begin to prefer punishers when the punishment is just.

Fairness Instinct

- What we see at all ages is an overall bias toward equality.
- Children expect equality, prefer those who divide resources equally, and are strongly biased to divide resources equally themselves.

- We are born with some sort of fairness instinct.

- Babies are moral animals, equipped by evolution with empathy and compassion, the capacity to judge the actions of others and even some rudimentary understanding of fairness and justice.

Moral Development

All children are born with a running start on the path to moral development. A number of inborn responses predispose them to act in ethical ways. For example, *empathy* – **the capacity to experience another person's pleasure or pain** – *is part of our native endowment as humans.*

Damon, 2006

The Moral Development of Children.

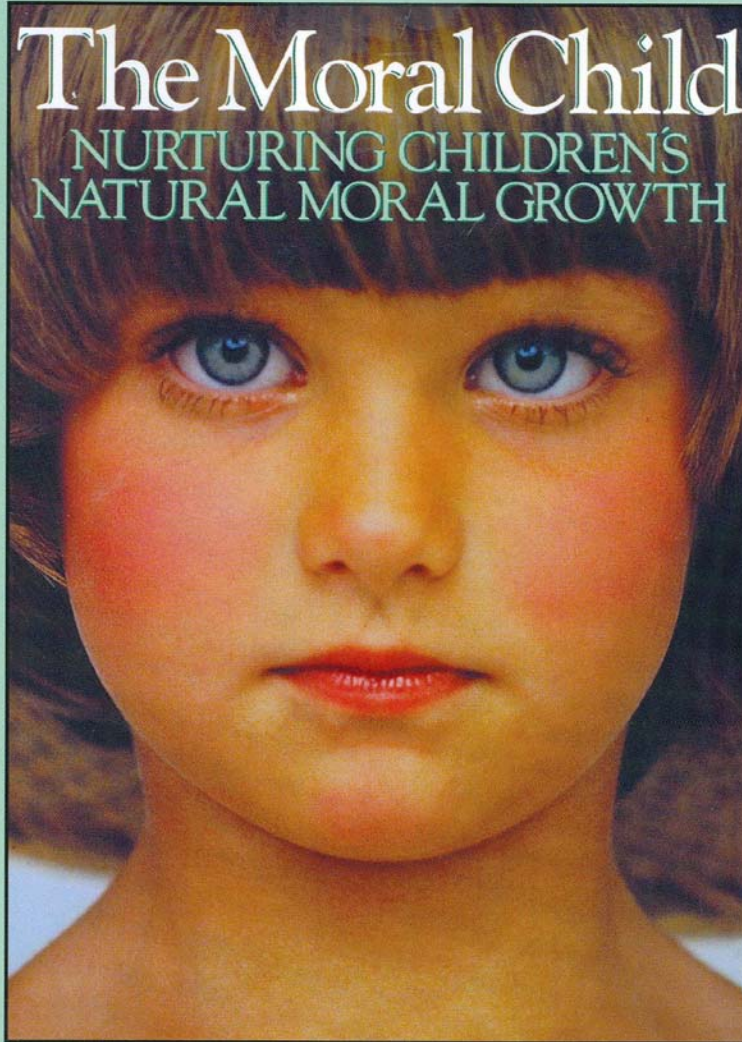
Moral Development

- This capacity for empathy stagnates or even diminishes for many people if it is not reinforced, continuously learned and refined through social experience.
- Other moral emotions that make an early appearance include shame, guilt, and indignation.

"A magisterial survey of scientific knowledge about children's moral development."—Howard Gardner, Harvard University

The Moral Child

NURTURING CHILDREN'S
NATURAL MORAL GROWTH



WILLIAM DAMON

Huitt, 2004

- Fundamental to many approaches to moral and character education, and a criticism of Kohlberg is a reliance on “right thinking” as leading to “right behavior”.

Lickona and Davidson, 2005

- Their research distinguished between moral character and performance character. Youth can be taught character traits which must be mastered well to be used for good.

What is Character?

- For most of us, character refers to something innate and unchanging – it is the core set of attributes that define ones' very essence.

Seligman and Peterson, 2011

- Define character much differently. It is a set of abilities or strengths that are very much changeable and entirely malleable.

- They are skills that you can learn.
- They are skills that you can practice.
- They are skills that you can teach.

Character Strengths that predict life satisfaction and high achievement (Peterson)

- Grit
- Self-Regulation
- Zest
- Social Intelligence
- Gratitude
- Optimism
- Curiosity

GRIT



Operational Definition

- Grit is firmness of mind and spirit: unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger. Leading researchers from the field of psychology, Angela Lee Duckworth and Christopher Peterson, define grit as perseverance and passion for long-term goals.

Journal Questions

- A) Chronicle major events in your life where you did not use grit. Be as comprehensive as you can by developing a personal history that goes back as far as you can remember.
- i) What happened?

Journal Questions

- ii) What was your response?
- iii) What was the outcome (consequence)?
- B) Pick several situations that you have written about and discuss how if you had used grit there would have been a different outcome. Be specific as to a different outcome. Be specific as to what you could have done differently.

Journal Questions

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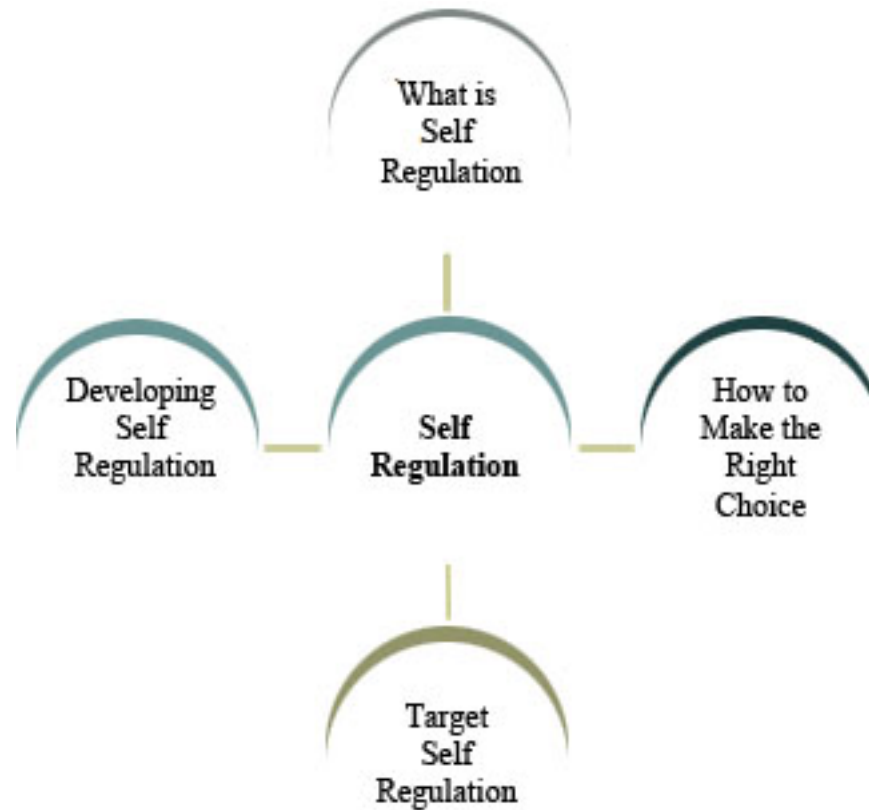
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- _____

- _____

SELF REGULATION



Operational Definition

- Self regulation, also known as self control, is the ability to control your behavior, especially in terms of reactions and impulses.
- Emotional regulation is control of one's feelings and reactions when dealing with difficult or confusing events and emotions.
- Self regulation should be seen as the foundation, or basic building block, for understanding and strengthening all other character traits.

Journal Questions

- A) Chronicle major events in your life where you did not use self regulation. Be as comprehensive as you can by developing a personal history that goes back as far as you can remember.
- i) What happened?

Journal Questions

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- _____

If-Then Thinking= Mental Contrasting

- Three Strategies are utilized when setting goals. (Duckworth and Oettingen).
- Two don't work very well.

- Optimists favor indulging, which means imagining the future they would like to achieve. Indulging feels really good when you are doing it but it does not correlate at all with actually achieving your goal.

- Pessimists use a strategy called dwelling, which involves thinking about all the things that will get in the way of their accomplishing a goal.

- Mental Contrasting combines the two methods: concentrating on a positive outcome and simultaneously concentrating on the obstacles in their way.

- Doing both at the same time creates a strong association between the future and reality that signals the need to overcome the obstacles in order to attain the desired future.

Implementation Intentions

- Specific plans in the form of if/then statements that link the obstacles with ways to overcome them.

Positive fantasizing

- “Dream it and you can achieve it”.

- To achieve long term goals you must have:
MOTIVATION and VOLITION

Your History is not Your Destiny

- Past performance is not always an indication of your future results.

Edlund, Clingman and Fowler

- The effects of primary reward on I.Q.

- Children given an I.Q. test and divided into three groups based on their test scores:
- High-IQ group had an average score of 119
- Medium-IQ group had an average score of 101
- Low-IQ group had an average score of 79

- Several months later they were given a second test.
- Half of the children in each group given an M&M for each right answer.
- The medium and high-IQ children did not improve their scores.
- The low-IQ children, who were given candy, raised their IQ scores to 97!

Segal, 2006

- “Working when no one is watching: Motivation, Test Scores, and Economic Success”

- His experiment suggests that it is the first score of 79 that is more relevant to their future prospects.
- They may not have been low in IQ, but they were low in motivation to do well without any obvious incentive.

Walter Mischell: “From good intentions to Willpower”

- An ingenious study to test the willpower.

The Marshmallow Test

- A child was brought into a small room and sat at a desk with a bell on it.
- The child was given a marshmallow.
- The experimenter announced that she was going to leave the room. The child was told that if they wanted to eat the treat, they only needed to ring the bell. If they waited until the experimenter returned on her own, he would get two treats.



Mischel checked up on the children more than a decade later.

There was a striking correlation between the child's wait times and their later academic success.

On average, children who had waited 15 minutes for their treat scored, on average, 210 points higher on the SAT.

Why IS ALL THIS IMPORTANT?

- In Skillstreaming and Anger Control we are giving youth strengths and skills that will be reinforced through character education and moral reasoning.
- Character matters!

Moral Reasoning Training

Dilemma discussion groups designed to teach children how to:

1. Think about moral issues.
2. Deal with moral situations that do not have clear-cut solutions.
3. Use principles of fairness and justice in their interactions with others.

Moral Reasoning Goals

- Increase the moral reasoning stage of the trainees.
- Help the trainees use newly learned and more advanced reasoning skills in the real world.

Delay in thought and behavior

- Antisocial youth show prolonged immaturity in the stage of moral judgment.
- They also demonstrate persistent and pronounced egocentric bias.

Ask...Don't Tell

- The leader should remember that his or her primary role is to cultivate the group: to guide or stimulate, not to inject statements or instructions.
- Follow-up questions are to challenge thinking errors and provide clarification.

“Benign Confrontation”

- Initial *questioning strategy* that allows the facilitator to *confront* initial participant *responses* that may be contradictory.
- Benign confrontation is *a sophisticated skill that encourages* a student to examine his or her behavior without “boiling over” or moving away.

Effective “Benign Confrontation” depends on 3 conditions.

1. Healthy Staff/Youth Relationship
2. Youth must have a basic level of trust in the Staff.
3. The Staff must have the skill to say what they mean, to mean what they say, and to not say it in a mean way.

Dave's Problem Situation

Dave's friend Matt is currently involved in drug sales. Once in a while, Matt even gives Dave some drugs for free. Now Matt says to Dave, "Listen, man, I've got to deliver some drugs on the south side, but I can't do it myself. How 'bout it - will you take the drugs down there for me in your car? I'll give you some new drugs to try plus \$50 dollars besides for just a half-hour's drive. Will you help me out?"

1. What should Dave say or do?

Should Dave agree to deliver the drugs for Matt? (check one)

- yes, should deliver
- no, shouldn't deliver
- can't decide

2. What if Dave knows that the drugs Matt wants him to deliver are laced with poison? Should he agree to deliver them? (check one)

- yes, should deliver
- no, shouldn't deliver
- can't decide

3. What if Dave knows that his sister, who lives on the south side, might take some of the laced drugs? Then should he agree to deliver them? (check one)

_____ yes, should deliver

_____ no, shouldn't deliver

_____ can't decide

4. Should Dave be taking the free drugs from Matt? (check one)

_____ yes, should take it

_____ no, shouldn't take it

_____ can't decide

5. What if Matt says that doing drugs is no big deal, that plenty of his friends use drugs all the time? Then should Dave be taking the free drugs? (check one)

_____ yes

_____ no

_____ can't decide

6. Let's say that Dave does make the drug delivery. Since Dave is just helping out Matt, he doesn't feel he's doing anything wrong. Should Dave feel he's doing something wrong? (check one)

_____ yes, wrong

_____ no, not wrong

_____ can't decide

7. How important is it to stay away from drugs? (check one)

_____ very important

_____ important

_____ not important