

Annotated Bibliography

INTENTIONAL

SELF-REGULATION

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Pathways
to Education

About Pathways to Education Canada

Pathways to Education is a national, charitable organization breaking the cycle of poverty through education. Its award-winning program is creating positive social change by supporting youth living in low-income communities to overcome barriers to education, graduate from high school, and build the foundation for a successful future. Through the collective power of partnerships, Pathways to Education's innovative program is preparing youth for tomorrow.

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Intentional Self-Regulation

This annotated bibliography presents a plain language overview of seminal studies on youth self-regulation. Self-regulation refers to “people’s deliberate attempts to use, modify, or inhibit their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to reach their goals” (Weiner, Geldhof, & Gestsdottir, 2015, p. 21). Intentional Self-Regulation (ISR) is a type of advanced self-regulation that is especially relevant during adolescence, consisting of “actions that are actively aimed toward harmonizing demands in the person’s social and physical context with a person’s resources in order to attain better functioning and enhance self-development” (Weiner, Geldhof, & Gestsdottir, 2015, p. 23). In short, ISR skills maximize goal-directed behaviours that lead to positive future outcomes. Self-regulation has been strongly linked to positive youth development (PYD) (Weiner, Geldhof, & Gestsdottir, 2015).

The aim of this annotated bibliography is not to offer an exhaustive and comprehensive collection of all relevant studies. Instead, we present a modest introduction, designed for those seeking an overview of this complex topic, a refresher, or a resource upon which to build more detailed and nuanced knowledge.

This document was developed for professionals who contribute to the well-being and development of youth. This includes those who work directly with youth, such as mentors, educators, child and youth workers, social workers, and front-line staff in school-based and out-of-school youth programs. This resource will also be of interest to those who work indirectly with or for youth: youth mentoring program managers, school administrators, or youth researchers.

This bibliography emerged from our own internal research on positive youth development, conducted in the context of program measurement, improvement, and impact assessment efforts. It has helped Pathways to Education Canada better understand this complex field and translate our knowledge into effective programming for youth furthest from opportunities. We share it here in the hopes that it will have similar impact in other youth-serving programs.

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Bowers, E. P., Geldhof, G. J., Schmid, K. L., Napolitano, C. M., Minor, K., & Lerner, J. V. (2012). Relationships with important nonparental adults and Positive Youth Development: An examination of youth self-regulatory strengths as mediators. *Research in Human Development, 9*(4), 298–316.

This study examines the mediating role of self-regulation skills in youth relationships with caring and supportive non-parental adults and shows that these relationships have a positive impact on adolescent development. The authors drew upon data from waves 6 through 8 of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, which included 710 participants in grades 10 to 12. The study found that the quantity of relationships with important non-parental adults was related to higher sense of hope for the future, which in turn predicted three of the 5Cs of Positive Youth Development, Confidence, Character, and Caring. Emotional closeness was also found to predict subsequent hopefulness for the future. That, in turn, predicted youth confidence in grade 12. There was also a significant relationship between youth intentional self-regulation and positive changes in character (having a moral compass, integrity, and being socially conscious).

Donnell, M. M., Urban, J. B., & Linver, M. R. (2015). A mixed-methods exploration of intentional self regulation and youth beliefs about the chances of achieving future aspirations. *Journal of Youth Development, 10*(3).

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the link between young people's Intentional Self-Regulation (ISR) skills and their feelings about their chances of achieving future aspirations. The authors hypothesized that there would be a significant and positive relationship between ISR and beliefs about the chances of achieving future aspirations, and also that qualitative measures would be more sensitive to detecting ISR than quantitative measures alone. 94 Scottish youth participated in the study. As expected, the presence of Intentional Self-Regulation skills, measured with a Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) questionnaire, was found to be predictive of young people's

confidence in attaining future aspirations. Additionally, a subset of youth were randomly selected to take part in interviews, which demonstrated their use of ISR skills, even when those skills were not evident from the SOC questionnaire.

Morgan, C., Sibthorp, J., & Wells, M. S. (2014). Fun, activities, and social context: Leveraging key elements of recreation programs to foster self-regulation in youth. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 32(3), 74–91.

Recreation programs are youth programs that “offer a dynamic learning environment, where youth can try new things, develop skills, and build new relationships, providing them with meaningful experiences that support gains in important life skills” (p. 76). The authors argue that recreation programs are an ideal context to promote self-regulation skill development in youth. This review aims to synthesize and connect the literature on self-regulation, youth development, and recreation programs, and to offer leverage points and strategies for recreation program staff to build self-regulation skills in their work with youth. The study provides an overview of the role of self-regulation and cognitive development in positive youth development. It also summarizes research on three contextual factors integral to recreation programs (fun and enjoyment, activities, and social context) that can be leveraged to help youth develop self-regulation skills. Additionally, the authors offer recreation professionals suggestions on how to support self-regulation in youth.

Mueller, M. K., Phelps, E., Bowers, E. P., Agans, J. P., Urban, J. B., & Lerner, R. M. (2011). Youth development program participation and intentional self-regulation skills: contextual and individual bases of pathways to positive youth development. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(6), 1115–1125.

This study examines how the combination of youth strengths and the contextual asset of participation in youth development programs in grades 8 and 9 promote mutually-beneficial relations that may lead to thriving in grade 10. The study uses data from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (PYD). As expected, Selection, Optimization, and Compensation skills (SOC) predicted PYD. Additionally, self-regulation and youth development program participation both predicted contribution. Also, participating in youth development programs in grade 8 positively predicted grade

9 self-regulation, which then predicted PYD and contribution in grade 10. These results suggest that participation in high-quality youth programs may be especially important for youth to develop individual strengths, and that the combination of youth strengths and program resources may be critical in PYD.

Napolitano, C. M., Bowers, E. P., Gestsdóttir, S., & Chase, P. A. (2011). The development of intentional self-regulation in adolescence: describing, explaining, and optimizing its link to positive youth development. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, 41, 19–38.

This article provides a review of intentional self-regulation (ISR) research. The authors “describe the development of ISR in adolescence, offer explanations for the development of these skills and their relation to positive youth development among diverse youth in diverse contexts, and provide suggestions for future research and programs seeking to optimize youth outcomes through the promotion of ISR skills” (p. 19-20). The article also discusses Project GPS, a youth program designed to promote ISR through mentoring.

Rapp-Paglicci, L., Stewart, C., & Rowe, W. (2011). Can a self-regulation skills and cultural arts program promote positive outcomes in mental health symptoms and academic achievement for at-risk youth? *Journal of Social Service Research*, 37, 309–319.

Prodigy is a program for youth living in contexts of risk and disadvantage. It offers classes on visual, performing, musical, media, and theatre arts to help youth build three types of self-regulation skills: social skills, anger management, and problem-solving skills. This study evaluated the mental health symptoms and academic performance of program participants to determine if participation could promote positive outcomes in these two domains. 108 adolescents and their parents were surveyed before and after the program. Results showed significant decreases in internalizing and externalizing mental health symptoms, increases in academic self-efficacy, and improved academic achievement.

Schmid, K. L., Phelps, E., & Lerner, R. M. (2011). Constructing positive futures: Modeling the relationship between adolescents' hopeful future expectations and intentional self regulation in predicting positive youth development. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(6), 1127-1135.

Using data from 7th, 8th, and 9th graders in the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, this study examines the relationship between intentional self-regulation (ISR) and hopeful expectations for the future in predicting Positive Youth Development (PYD). As expected, both ISR skills and having hopeful expectations about the future strongly predicted PYD. Additionally, having hope about the future may be an initial factor which influences later ISR abilities. The findings suggest that the level of hope young people have about their future may be essential to thriving during adolescence.

Urban, J. B., Lewin-Bizan, S., & Lerner, R. M. (2010). The role of intentional self regulation, lower neighborhood ecological assets, and activity involvement in youth developmental outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39(7), 783-800.

This study, a follow-up to Urban, Lewin-Bizan, & Lerner (2009), examines how the intentional self-regulation skill level of youth living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods interacts with participation in extracurricular activities to effect positive youth development. Data on 545 adolescents in 7th grade was drawn from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development. Three outcomes were assessed: a composite measure of PYD and two measures of negative development: depressive symptoms and risk behaviours. Results showed that youth with higher intentional self-regulation (ISR) skills benefitted more from extracurricular activities than their peers with less capacity to self-regulate.

Vohs, K. D., & Baumeister, R. F. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of self-regulation: Research, theory, and applications*. Third Edition. New York: The Guilford Press.

This textbook provides a comprehensive examination of several facets of self-regulation. It consists of 32 chapters written by experts in the topic and is divided into six parts: 1) Basic Regulatory Processes, 2) Cognitive, Physiological, and Neurological

Dimensions of Self-Regulation, 3) Social, Organizational, and Cultural Dimensions of Self-Regulation, 4) Personality and Self-Regulation, 5) Development and Self-Regulation, and 6) Self-Regulation Challenges. Topics explored include: self-regulation of emotion, the role of habits and of sleep, trust, romantic relationships, religion, impulsivity, grit, self-regulation training, aging, crime, addiction, and financial well-being.

Weiner, M. B., Geldhof, G. J., & Gestsdottir, S. (2015). Intentional self-regulation in youth: Applying research findings to practice and programs. In E. P. Bowers, G. John Geldhof, S. K. Johnson, L. J. Hilliard, R. M. Hershberg, J. V. Lerner, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Promoting Positive Youth Development* (pp. 21–36). Springer.

This book chapter aims to bridge the gap between research and practice in intentional self-regulation (ISR) research. Research has consistently demonstrated a link between self-regulation skills and positive youth development, yet this knowledge has not yet been presented in an accessible way to practitioners and policy makers. This chapter is written for youth development practitioners and policy makers who wish to promote thriving among youth by utilizing research on self-regulation. The authors conducted a literature review of self-regulation research, inclusive of studies dating back to the early 2000s. This chapter provides an excellent summary of the key findings from the recent self-regulation body of research.

The chapter discusses lessons learned from research on self-regulation and its limitations. The authors also recommend five priorities for improving youth policy and practice: ISR should become a benchmark for evaluating programs and policies; Adolescent ISR should become a funding priority; ISR should be promoted across the life span; Developing ISR requires a collective effort by a variety of stakeholders; Improving ISR is only part of a successful intervention.

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