

29<sup>th</sup> World Summit on

# POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY, MINDFULNESS AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

May 21-22, 2018 | New York, USA

## The impact of self-control and grit strategies on school-age children with externalizing problems: The benefits of mental contrasting

**Julia Belfer**

Nova Southeastern University, USA

The purpose of this study is to review whether mental contrasting (MC) can increase self-control in children with externalizing behavior. MC strategies have been shown to potentiate strength of self-regulation and grit (goal pursuit). Children with externalized problems struggle with setting and striving for goals, mostly goals that require self-discipline. One of the reasons behind this struggle is their lack of effortful control. New literature on positive psychology has begun to explore the use of signature strengths, which are the strengths that individuals believe to be most central to who they are, and are associated with well-being and less psychological distress. Grit and self-control, two of these strengths, are associated with low levels of effortful control. Thus, interventions that might improve these strengths can also improve children's behavior. Self-control is the capacity to regulate attention, emotion and behavior. Grit entails goals and working assiduously towards those goals with perseverance. Research indicates that self-control and goal commitment are enhanced by MC, a strategy that involves the elaboration of a desired goal with the relevant obstacles of the present reality. It also includes the implementation intentions that elaborate on the action one will take to achieve the goal. In other words, in MC, the fantasies of a desired outcome are first elaborated, and the negative reality is framed as "standing in the way" of realizing the desired future. The results suggest that MC can be an effective self-regulation and goal-pursuit strategy for school-age children with externalizing behavior. In addition, MC strategies can be used to promote self-control and grit and prevent the development of externalizing behavior.

### Biography

Julia Belfer is currently pursuing her PsyD in Clinical Psychology at Nova Southeastern University. She is graduated from Teachers College, Columbia University with a Master's degree in Psychology in Education, and she subsequently worked at the New York Psychiatric Institute for a year prior to attending NSU. Her clinical interests include child and adolescents with disruptive behavior.

jb3047@mynsu.nova.edu

### Notes: