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# Psychoeducational Group Counseling to Enhance Self-Control in Middle School Students

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Psychoeducational Group Counseling to Enhance Self-Control in Middle School Students

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### Abstract

This study evaluated self-control of middle school students (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders) in a psychoeducational group. The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not students are learning and becoming more aware of their own self-control during situations they may encounter. Students attending a Lunch Bunch group have focused on aspects of learning and enhancing their self-control. A pre-test/post-test was used to evaluate students' self-control using a 10-item self-reporting survey. Data analysis in the study included a comparison between students' responses on the pre and post self-control survey. Moreover, conclusions were also drawn regarding differences in group experiences between students with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and those without.

*Keywords:* counseling, self-control, aggression, group counseling, individual educational plans, students, middle school, counselor.

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## Psychoeducational Group Counseling to Enhance Self-Control in Middle School Students

### **Introduction**

At the school where the study was conducted, some middle school students are mandated to group counseling based on two reasons. One, they are mandated because of their Individualized Education Plan, and two, teachers, staff and administration felt the student needed to attend group counseling because of difficulties with social skills, friendship building, etc. The school was wondering whether or not the mandated group counseling was helping the students with social skills in the school setting and whether it should or should not be continued. This year the focus of the psychoeducational group was on self-control. The faculty believed the students struggle with maintaining self-control and continually need to be reminded of this from the counselors, teachers, and staff. The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not students were learning and becoming more aware of their own self-control during situations they may encounter. A pre-test/post-test was used to evaluate students' self-control using a 10-item self-reporting survey. Data analysis in the study included a comparison between students' responses on the pre and post self-control survey. Moreover, conclusions were also drawn regarding differences in group experiences between students with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and those without. There has been little to no research done on this specific topic. There has been however, some research on self-control specifically in correlation to aggression or anger behavior (Wills, 2006). The literature review will discuss self-control, aggression in middle school, self-control and aggression combined, group counseling as in intervention, and Individual Education Plans. The study is important because it can help counselors, administration, faculty and staff understand ideas of what is helpful for the students in the middle school currently and for future students. It is also a helpful reminder in working together to give

students tools and the ability to grow in life. The research question for this study was: “Does a psychoeducational group enhance self-control in middle school students? Also looking at students with IEP’s compared to students without IEP’s.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Self-Control**

Self-Control defined by Webster’s Dictionary states the ability to control oneself, in particular one’s emotions and desires, especially in difficult situations. In theoretical articles, self-control is defined as a set of related abilities that involve focusing and shifting attention, monitoring behavior, linking behaviors and consequences over time, and considering alternatives before acting (Wills, 2006).

There are three basic elements of self-control: self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement (Meyer, 1978). Self-observation or self-monitoring occurs when individuals are not naturally accurate observers of themselves; they must be trained to do so, and their accuracy should be checked against external criteria when possible. Self-monitoring is a trait that refers to an ability to regulate behavior to accommodate social situations. It is often used because it helps the child with changing the target behavior. The changes however, have been found to be short-lived without the addition of self-evaluation and self-reinforcement (Meyer, 1978). The next component is self-evaluation, which consists of establishing personal goals or criteria in order to judge one’s performance. Self-evaluation is often used to assess how a person may be doing at a new job and assessing if there needs to be improvement in any areas. The third and final component of self-control is self-reinforcement. Self-reinforcement requires the individual to be able to administer the reinforcement any time for any response he or she sees fit (Meyers, 1978). Self-reinforcement may be used to encourage someone to lose weight and once they hit their

goal they buy themselves something they want as a positive reinforcement. Consistent results demonstrate self-reinforcement significantly improves the effectiveness of self-monitoring. Self-control appears more applicable in the area of learning, once learned self-control extends beyond treatment and training. Self-Control, as its name implies, puts the focus of control with the individual, and it has been shown to be applicable to complex behaviors, such as classroom behavior, heterosexual relations, study habits, and weight control (Meyer, 1978). Self-Control is a way to help an individual maintain the complex behaviors of helping skills (Meyer, 1978). Self-Control can be used for many different situations. One situation that often happens in middle school is aggression and anger. Students can use self-control skills to help contain their aggression.

### **Aggression in Middle School**

Research indicates that interpersonal conflicts in the form of physical violence are only part of school experiences. There are various sources of subtle interpersonal conflicts that go beyond physical harm, thereby inflicting psychological and emotional harm on victims (Batsche, 1997). It is clear that the efforts to create positive school experiences should target a wide range of conflicts that permeate students' social experiences (Yoon, Barton, & Taiariol, 2004). In contrast to physical aggression (i.e., hitting, kicking) that involves bodily injuries, relational aggression involves interpersonally manipulative behaviors. These behaviors include direct control (i.e., "You can't be my friend unless . . ."), social alienation (i.e., giving peers the silent treatment), rejection (i.e., telling rumors or lies about a peer so that others in the group will reject him or her), and social exclusion (i.e. deliberately being excluded from a peer group, being called names, or purposefully being embarrassed). Relational aggression has been found in children as young as 3 years old whereas more sophisticated and covert forms of relational

aggression have been found in middle childhood and adolescence. Many relationally aggressive behaviors are frequently reported and present significant concerns in middle schools. Most research has been conducted at the elementary level. Aggression, youth violence, and victimization generally decrease with age. Relational aggression in middle childhood and adolescence may be more salient because of developmental milestones in this period (Yoon et al., 2004).

Significant growth in cognitive and social areas takes place in middle school, and these developmental changes affect interpersonal relationships in quality and structure. Batsche (1997) argued that these developmental issues should be taken into consideration in understanding the covert, manipulative nature of relational aggression. An important developmental task at this age is to effectively navigate through peer relationships and successfully resolve interpersonal conflicts. These tasks increase levels of social competence. In particular, peer relationships that involve emotional closeness and intimacy become an important part of a child's social life (Batsche, 1997). In this developmental context, a possible attempt to hurt an intimate friendship or social reputation would be perceived as an enormous threat and is most likely to have significant implications in peer relationships. Researchers also speculate that with increased needs for peer acceptance, relational aggression may be used as a way to fit in (Batsche, 1997). This is an example of how self-control may help students work through issues with peer relationships so aggression isn't the first and only choice.

### **Self-Control and Aggression**

Children who tend to have a lot of aggression, also tend to struggle with maintaining self-control. A concern regarding adolescent risk taking is whether adolescents have the capability to control such drives (Romer, Duckworth, Sznitman & Park, 2010). Adolescents at this age have

difficulties maintaining self-control as a result of possible peer pressure, anger issues, or relationships (Romer et al., 2010). When working with children who show an increase in disobedient and disruptive behaviors in school, it is suggested to apply a self-control intervention, specifically the Self-Control Intervention Model, (Ronen, 2004). Research suggests that the more this intervention is applied, the less likely aggressive and disruptive behaviors will be seen in the school setting. The Self-Control Intervention Model aims to equip children both with self-control skills and with self-help methods to facilitate their future independent functioning (Ronen, 2004). Enhancing children's self-help skills enables them to maintain successful outcomes by continuing their basic learning from this model (Ronen, 2004). This intervention aims to teach the child that a behavior can be changed and that, as with many other kinds of behavior, this change depends on the child. Self-control trains the child in techniques such as self-talk, self-evaluation, self-monitoring, thinking aloud, and problem solving skills. This research shows that implementing this intervention into the classroom benefits the child to use self-control within the whole school day and not just in one specific classroom. Practice includes using self-instruction, in sessions and in homework assignments, to overcome disappointments and learn to control one's self. The research finds that through practice, the child understands as confidence and self-control grows, the chances of success also increase (Ronen, 2004). Counselors work with students to learn and maintain self-control. One way to enhance the student's knowledge of self-control is group counseling.

### **Psychoeducational Group Counseling as an Intervention**

Psychoeducational group counseling has been long recognized as a helpful prevention and intervention method to assist humans (Gladding, 1995). Group counseling provides an excellent opportunity for school counselors to reach many students at once. School counselors,

in recent years, are turning more to psychoeducational group counseling in working with students (Crepeau-Hobson, Filaccio, & Gottfried, 2005). School counselors recognize a planned, purposeful, and effective counseling session is available to a greater number of students through this group work (Becky & Farren, 1997). Group counseling with adolescents has shown to be effective for a variety of issues, including classroom behavior and self-control, academic underachievement, aggressive behavior, and eating disorders (Lazaro, Font, Moreno, Calvo, & Vila, 2010). Other aspects of group counseling are enhancing self-esteem (Hlongwane & Bason, 1990), building friendship skills (Rosenthal, 1993), and friendship intimacy (Shechtman, 1994) which are highly important factors in child's wellbeing and academic success (Bemak & Chung, 2005).

Psychoeducational group work has often been the treatment of choice in successful interventions to improve social acceptance and behavior (Bemak & Chung, 2005). It is thought to be more effective than individual psychotherapy because of social learning through insight, peer modeling, problem solving and validation (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Also, working together increases critical thinking and problem solving skills. Through group work, students are provided an opportunity to work collaboratively to uncover solutions to common problems and practice skills in solving their concerns (Bemak & Chung, 2005).

A program discussed by Lochman, Wells, & Murry (2007) involves a series of groups with specific coverage topics that have correlating parent meetings. The premise of the program is that psychoeducational groups work for students but also require reinforcement at home which is assisted through the parent meetings. In addition to working with students and parents it is vital that teachers be trained, so materials that are learned in the groups can be carried over into the classroom. Researchers suggest that teachers attend training in intervention skills, self-

efficacy, and lectures to gain a wide range of useful knowledge (Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004).

### **Individual Educational Plans (IEP)**

Students who are mandated to group counseling may be mandated because of his/her Individual Education Plan (IEP). According to the United States Department of Education an IEP is defined as a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting with the IEP team (2004). An IEP team may consist of a regular education teacher of the child, a special education teacher of the child, a school district representative, a school psychologist, school counselor, the parents, and the child (if old enough to understand).

School counselors contribute to the IEP process. This may be by taking a group leadership role or by bringing a focus to the student's nonacademic needs (Milsom, Goodnough, & Akos, 2007). Because so often the focus of the student is on the academics, the school counselor brings focus elsewhere. Milsom et al., (2007) suggested the most important way in which a school counselor can contribute to the IEP process is by bringing attention to the students' affective concerns. School counselors may also be in charge of implementing interventions that the IEP team determines. With knowledge and training in interventions, school counselors can assist the IEP teams in developing relevant goals and identifying realistic individual or group counseling interventions to assist students in meeting these goals.

### **Conclusion**

Group counseling has been used as an intervention for numerous years and has found to be very effective. Mandated group counseling can be an option for students who are either

mandated because of their IEP or mandated because faculty and staff in the school believe it to be beneficial for the child.

Research indicates that aggression in middle school is only part of school experiences in relation to violence. Self-control is an option for students to use when faced with anger and aggression. There is only a handful of research on aggression and self-control, but even less research when it comes to self-control and mandated students (Romer et al., 2010). There is little to no research done on mandated students and self-control which shows how important it is for more research to be done. The purpose of this research study was to determine whether group counseling improved self-control in middle school students with IEP's compared to students without IEP's. Because the lack of research on self-control in middle school is so prominent, this research study will bring more awareness to this topic and researchers. Such as, understanding self-control and how it can be beneficial for middle school students and recognizing that more research still needs to be done. This study will contribute to emerging literature about the impact of counseling and psychoeducational groups on self-control and aggression of middle school students.

## **Methods**

### **Setting**

The research study took place at a rural middle school in upstate New York. The middle school included 174 total students ranging in grades 6 to 8 and serves a primarily White population. Of this population, 57% of students were male and 43% were female. Student race was represented by 95% White, 2% Multiracial, 2% Asian, 1/2% African American, and 1/2% Hispanic. The school district includes portions of five townships. Many parents are employed in local industry or on farms. The school curriculum is a traditional college preparatory program including French and Spanish. Accredited by New York State Regents and Middle Atlantic

Association, Graduates of 2015 were divided up by 45% going to a 4 year college, 30% to a 2 year college, and 25% other.

### **Participants**

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not students were learning and becoming more aware of their own self-control during situations they may encounter. The research examined how effective a psychoeducational group was with middle school students, aiming to enhance self-control, and comparing and contrasting students with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) versus students without IEPs. The selected participants were Caucasian students in grades 6, 7, or 8. The participants were already attending a counseling lunch bunch group in which they learned and practiced social skills. The groups were divided into a boys group and a girls group. The groups include 7 males, and 6 females. A total of 13 students were invited to participate in the study. All 13 students were administered the self-control survey. Criteria to participating in this study included getting a consent form signed by parents and having the student then sign an assent form giving the researcher permission to use the data found. 6 students committed to participating in the research. All 13 students continued to attend the lunch bunch groups and contribute to the self-control psychoeducational activities, but the research only used the data collection from the 6 students who had the consent form signed. The 6 Caucasian participants included 2 males, and 4 females. 4 of the participants are classified as students with disabilities and had an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) while 2 participants did not have an IEP.

### **Procedures**

#### **IRB Proposal/Agreement**

The researcher began working on the IRB process on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The researcher and the IRB coordinator communicated many times regarding clarifications and revisions of the IRB application. The first set of revisions were corrected by the researcher and sent back on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the second set of revisions and corrections were made and returned on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The third and finally revisions were sent to the IRB coordinator on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015. The researcher received IRB approval on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015. The researcher received an official approval letter from the IRB coordinator on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

### **Sampling**

Participants were recruited for this study as a result of their prior involvement in lunch bunch. Once the researcher received IRB approval, the researcher explained the study to both groups of lunch bunch students. The researcher explained how the study was going to be presented and explained the consent and assent forms needed. The researcher explained to the students' two forms needed to be signed. First, the consent form which was to be signed by the students' parents, second the assent form, to be signed by the student. Following this explanation, the researcher handed out an envelope for each student to give to their parents explaining the study and the consent form that needed to be signed. The inclusion criteria for participants were to have the consent form signed by a parent and attend all the scheduled lunch bunch groups. The exclusion criteria were if participants did not have their parent sign the consent form handed out, in which their data was not included in the data analysis. The researcher reached the total number of participants by reaching out to parents to get the consent forms signed, such as phone calls, emails, and meetings with parents. The researcher originally sent home the paperwork with the participants in a sealed envelope with the parent's names addressed. A few participants returned the signed form to the researcher. Also one parent called

the researcher to find out more about the study and after the researcher explained, the parent signed and sent the form in. After about a week, the researcher sent out the paperwork again to parents this time through the school pony mail in case the original paperwork did not make it home with students. After this was sent out, a few more participants brought back a signed consent form. The researcher reached out a final time and sent forms home again with students asking to give to their parents but no more signed consent forms were returned.

Once consent and assent forms were returned by students to the researcher or secretary in the counseling center, the researcher created a number code for the participants' data such as, Student 01, 02, 03, etc... The survey was collected in the counseling center conference room and stored in a locked cabinet in the counseling center office. There was no agreement and/or payments made to the participants. Once the data was collected the researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data. This was done by computing the mean, median, range and standard deviation using a calculator for the six participant's pre and post test scores.

Being that the study was on a psychoeducational group there were possible risks and benefits for the participants. A possible risk for participants was minimal time. Because the students and researcher only meet for a half-hour when taking the pre-test/post-test, it could be a struggle for some students to complete the survey. A precaution of this was to immediately give the students the survey when they arrived so they could use all thirty minutes if needed. Also, during the instructions the researcher let the students know and expressed it was okay if they were not able to finish the whole survey in the time allotted.

Another risk was if the student did not understand the survey question asked. This could have made the student become frustrated with the survey. A precaution was to inform the students they had the right to skip any survey questions they didn't understand or to raise their

hand to ask me a question about the survey. The researcher did this during the beginning when she read the directions to the students. A final risk was possible emotional distress from what was being learned during the psychoeducational group and taking the pre and post-tests. The researcher handled this by meeting with the students individually to discuss the feelings while taking the survey and come up with coping strategies to try and eliminate or push through those feelings if they were to arise again.

Personal benefits that students may have received were understanding and getting a better sense of their self-control, as well as communication with peers and building of peer relationships. This would be a benefit because these are some of the skills the lunch bunch groups aim to discuss with students and help increase their abilities. Another benefit would be the students becoming more comfortable with peers and building peer relationships. The more opportunities students have to build and grow peer relationships the easier it may become. An additional benefit could be the students becoming more comfortable with reading a survey and completing the following questions. This is a benefit because students will get extra practice which may help when they start to talk state tests and regents. A final benefit from the psychoeducational group was possible deeper self-awareness of one's self-control. This is a benefit for the students, in hopes they will be reminded of using self-control in aspects and situations in their life that will result in a reward or positive outlook and not a consequence.

The intended number of participants for the study was 13; the achieved size was actually 6. The intended number of participants was determined based on the 13 students who already attend the Lunch Bunch counseling group. The achieved size was determined by the total number of signed consent forms that were returned by students with a parent's signature and then assent from the student. The factors that contributed to this difference of intended versus

achieved numbers would be the students taking the consent forms home and giving them to their parents, then the students bringing the signed forms back to the researcher. If this was done, then the researcher needed the student to fill out an assent form. Student assent forms could not be completed until parent consent forms were signed and returned. Another factor was parent's not wanting student's data being used in the study so no signed form was returned, in which case the researcher could not use their survey for data collection.

### **Ethical Standards**

The researcher found many ethical standards which coincide with the study. The following are:

- A.2 Informed Consent in Counseling Relationship
- A.7.b Confidentiality and Advocacy
- A.9.b Protecting Clients
- B.1 Respecting Client's Rights, Privacy, and Confidence

All the standards listed above were believed by the researcher to be ethical standards this study identifies with. Informed Consent in Counseling Relationship was met in this study because the researcher had permission from the participant's parents to use their child's data in the study.

The researcher also got the students' assent for the data to be used. Confidentiality and

Advocacy was met because not only was the data collected confidential because of the number codes, but the psychoeducational group activities and experiences were confidential as well.

This was because the group came up with group rules and consequences on what would happen if someone in the group broke confidentiality. Protecting Client's was also an ethical standard that needed to be met with this study. The researcher needed to continue to make sure the participants were being protected throughout the psychoeducational group experience. Again, the researcher did this by having the groups come up with rules for confidentiality and

consequences for the group if confidentiality was broken. The final ethical standard that needed to be met was Respecting Client's Rights, Privacy, & Confidence. This needed to be met because respecting a client and their rights, privacy, and confidence may make the participant feel more comfortable to disclose and show involvement in the group and possible future experiences with the researcher.

### **Instruments**

During the first session, the researcher administered the 10 Item Self-Control Scale. This scale was free to use and score. The researcher adapted the scale from June Price Tangney's journal "High Self-Control Predicts Good Adjustment, Less Pathology, Better grades, and Interpersonal success." Tangney found the use of the Self-Control survey helped students become more aware of their own self-control and how it is implemented in their daily lives (2004). The overall purpose of the scale was to score how students use self-control in their daily lives. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher self-control. The Self-Control scale was a 10 item instrument. The responses were measured on a Likert scale ("Not at all like me," "A little like me," "Somewhat like me," "Mostly like me," "Very much like me"). A sample item on the Self-Control scale was "I often act without thinking through all the alternatives." Scoring on the Self-Control Scale includes scoring all the items with a number one to five. The minimum score a participant can receive was 1 and the maximum score a participant could receive was a 5. Higher scores indicated higher self-control.

The 10 Item Self-Control Scale was adapted from The Self-Control Scale which was originally a 36 item scale. Researchers such as June Tangney, Roy Baumesiter, and Angie Boone (2004) used the Self-Control Scale for a study and then created the 10 Item Self-Control Scale picking what they felt were the 10 most important items from the original scale to use in a

shorter version. The researchers found (2004) that higher scores on self-control correlated with a higher grade point average, better adjustment (fewer reports of psychopathology, higher self-esteem), less binge eating and alcohol abuse, better relationships and interpersonal skills, secure attachment, and more optimal emotional responses. The new scale showed good internal consistency and retest reliability.

The 10-Item Self-Control Scale was administered again during the last group session. Confidentiality was maintained by using participant numbers on the questionnaires. A master list of participant code numbers matched with names was kept in a locked cabinet in the counseling center. The questions from this inventory were used to help the participant's gauge how high or low their self-control was from the beginning of this study until the end. The goal of this study was to see if participant's self-control increased after 4 weeks of psychoeducational groups learning more about self-control. The inventory identified the range of the participant's self-control in which helped answer whether or not a psychoeducational group enhances self-control on middle school students.

### **Design and Group Detail**

The research design used for this study was a quantitative descriptive study. The researcher used a survey which the students completed. This was given to the participants as a pre-test and post-test for the data collection. After the instrument was administered the researcher collected the surveys at the end of the lunch bunch group. The surveys were then stored in a locked cabinet in the counseling center. Each group was a half hour during lunch. Students would go and get their lunch from the cafeteria and bring it to the counseling center. Sessions were held once a week and students received counseling passes during their first block class to remind them about the group. All sessions took place in the Counseling Center

conference room. The room had a large table in the middle of the room with chairs all around the table. A whiteboard and projector were also available for use if needed. During the sessions, the participants sat at the large table, while the researcher sat at the head of the table with the students. The researcher read the survey aloud to the students and paused in between questions to give the participants time to answer each question.

Again the purpose of this study was to see whether or not a psychoeducational group enhances self-control in middle school students. The study also looked at the comparisons of students with IEPs versus students without IEPs. The psychoeducational group was a 6 week group where participants came during their lunch for the lunch bunch group. Week 1 consisted of the researcher administering the pre-test inventory with the participants. The researcher went through and read each 10 items aloud in case any of the participants didn't understand. When the participants were done, if there was time left, they were allowed to return to lunch. Most participants took the whole half-hour to complete the inventory and eat their lunch. Week 2 consisted of the researcher giving the participants the definition of self-control and the explanation of the importance and benefits of using self-control. This was done all while participants voiced their thoughts on self-control. Week 3 consisted of the researcher implementing a Self-Control Bubbles lesson plan. Participants showed focus and attention to the lesson and joined in at the end coming up with examples on when you need to use self-control which is also when the bubbles came into play. Week 4 involved the researcher teaching the participants the 3 steps for self-control lesson. Again, student participation was used to come up with examples of using self-control. Week 5 consisted of the researcher and participants sitting down and talking through self-control and personal experiences. Students were able to identify either a time they used good self-control or a time where they wish they would had. This lead to

great conversation within the group to discuss outcomes and how participants should handle situations in the future. Week 6 consisted of the researcher once again administering the post-test inventory. The researcher read aloud each statement and aloud participants to ask questions if needed. If students were done before time was up they were able to go back to the lunch room if they wished or stay in the counseling center for the remaining time. The group encounter every week was very attentive. The participants always came to group on time and ready to dive into whatever the researcher had planned. The participants always respected each other and the researcher in the group and had good working relationships. They listened to each other and had things to say to one another, especially when talking about personal experiences. The groups understood confidentiality and respected each other's experiences and contributions to the group.

The data in the study was analyzed by the researcher finding the descriptive statistics of the data presented from the participants in the pre and post-tests. The researcher analyzed the data to examine whether or not the 6 week psychoeducational group on self-control was effective with middle school students.

### **Results**

The results of this study were used to determine whether or not a psychoeducational group was beneficial to enhance self-control within middle school students. A pre and post-test were used to measure each student's level of self-control. A 6 week psychoeducational group was directed with the participants to determine the benefit of the group. The 6 week psychoeducational group consisted of a group activity followed by discussion that related to self-control for 4 weeks while the other 2 weeks consisted of pre and post-test administration. Week 1 consisted of the researcher administering the pre-test inventory with the participants. Week 2 involved the researcher giving the participants the definition of self-control and the explanation

of the importance and benefits of using self-control. Week 3 consisted of the researcher implementing a Self-Control Bubbles lesson plan. Week 4 involved the researcher teaching the participants the 3 steps for self-control lesson. Week 5 consisted of the researcher and participants sitting down and talking through self-control and personal experiences. Week 6 consisted of the researcher once again administering the post-test inventory.

Students were recruited to this psychoeducational group study because they were already attending Lunch Bunch every week. The participants continued to attend the Lunch Bunch group which included the 6 week psychoeducational group on self-control. Students would receive a pass in their first block class to come to the counseling center during lunch. Students would then get their lunches at 12:00pm and report to the counseling center conference room for group.

The results focused on a pre and post-test self-scoring scale. Descriptive statistics were used to compare the pre and post-test of the six participants. The mean for the pre-test was 3.0, the median was 2.5, the range was 1.8, and the standard deviation was .7. For the post-test the mean was 2.8, the median was 2.6, the range was 1.9, and the standard deviation was .7.

Table 1:

Student	Male vs. Female	IEP vs. Non IEP	Pre-Test Scores	Post-Test Scores
Student 01	Female	IEP	3.4	2.8
Student 02	Female	IEP	2.4	2.2
Student 03	Male	Non IEP	2.5	2.2
Student 04	Female	IEP	3.7	4.1
Student 05	Male	Non IEP	2	2.4
Student 06	Female	IEP	3.8	3.6

Table 1 shows the scores of the participants on the pre and post-test. The results show 33% of participant scores increased, while 67% of participant scores decreased. On average females

scored higher than males. On the pre-test female participants' average score was 3.3, range was 1.4 and standard deviation was .6. The male participants' average score was 2.3, range was 0.5 and standard deviation was .4. Whereas, on the post-test the female participants' average score was 3.2, range was 1.9 and standard deviation was .8. The male participants' average score was 2.3, range was 0.2 and standard deviation was 0.1.

Table 2:

IEP vs. Non IEP	Pre-Test Average	Post Test Average	Notes
Individual Educational Plans	3.3	3.2	Decrease in score averages
Non-Individual Educational Plans	2.3	2.3	Score averages stayed the same

Table 2 illustrates the averages of both the pre and post-tests of participants with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) versus participants without an Individual Educational Plan. The chart shows participants with IEP's had a slight decrease of score averages after the 4 week psychoeducational groups on self-control. Whereas, the participants without an IEP average scores stayed the same.

### Discussion

Self-Control is a way to help an individual maintain the complex behaviors of helping skills (Meyer, 1978). Self-Control puts the focus of control with the individual, and it has been shown to be applicable to complex behaviors, such as classroom behavior, heterosexual relations, study habits, and weight control (Meyer, 1978). In the current study, the researcher developed a 6-week psychoeducational group based on literature (Tangney, 2004).

Psychoeducational group counseling was the intervention and the results were measured by pre and post-test data, utilizing the 10 Item Self-scoring Self-Control Scale. The researcher's

hypothesis was after the post-test, participants would exhibit greater understanding of their own self-control. Based on the findings, the psychoeducational group enhanced self-control within 33% of participants, making the researcher believe the group was effective. The researcher believed this to be the case because participants did not fully understand what self-control was or how to use it properly until after the 4 weeks of psychoeducational groups, which at that point they completed the post-test. The researcher believes the students did not know or understand what self-control was when they first completed the pre-test, which is why they scored so high, thinking they were aware of and implemented good self-control. It wasn't until after the group activities and discussions did they realize when they were implementing self-control. This is why they were able to be more honest during the post-test, which lead many of them to score lower. The researcher believes the longer the psychoeducational group could have gone the more aware the participants would have been with their self-control. Not to say this study was not beneficial because it was believed to be, but the researcher feels the more practice and awareness the students could have received the better usage of self-control they would have had.

### **Similarities and Differences with Past Literature**

Past literature shows people with higher self-control have less anger and better management because they are more aware of how to implement self-control (Tangney, 2004). Although the results show only 33% of participants self-control increased, while 67% decreased, the researcher believes this is because participants became more aware of what self-control is and aware of their own personal self-control compared to what they originally thought when taking the pre-test. The researcher believes this because, students were showing less acting out during lunch bunch, more listening to one another talk, and more ability to identify personal self-control situations since the beginning of the group, which is also said to be true in past literature

(Tangney,2004). Literature also shows people with higher self-control apparently accept themselves as valuable, worthy individuals and are relatively well able to sustain this view of self across time and circumstances (Tangney, 2004). This study shows 33% of participants had higher self-control after completing the post-test. This shows the researcher participants may become more accepting and aware of this for themselves, which would be a positive learning development. Lastly, the literature shows participants who score lower on self-control have a higher rate of incidences of impulse behaviors, which is what the counselors and faculty have been seeing from the participants throughout the school year.

### **Limitations**

A limitation to the study was the small participant size (six participants). This small participant size makes it hard to generalize the study. The middle school where the study was conducted had 174 students, so using a study with 6 students was difficult to generalize if the findings are the same for the rest of the school district. This goes for similar neighboring school districts in the area as well. A possible solution to this would be offering the group to more students for a larger sample size. In addition to there only being six participants, the majority of the sessions at least one person was not present. The varying combinations of six participants imply a lack of inconsistent cohesion within the group. This could be an issue because some students are learning more information than others and may understand their own self-control better than others due to always attending the group sessions and not missing a session. A possible solution could be to ask the group in the next session to highlight and explain to the group what was discussed in the previous group session. Participants' absence from the group consisted of reasons such as absence from school, academic responsibilities, and issues with students receiving passes from their first period teacher to attend lunch bunch. This was a

limitation because participants received more information than other participants, so students who attended all sessions may have had more benefits from the group compared to other participants. A possible solution to this could be informing students about the group farther ahead so possible participants can have more time to join, or coming up with a bigger target audience in invite to participate in the group.

Along with participant size would be lack of parent consent forms completed. If parent consent forms were not completed participant data was not able to be used. A larger sample size from more returned parent consent forms may have given the researcher more data and possibly the ability to generalize the study. This would have been helpful so the study could show more generalization to the school size and not just the 6 participants. With a bigger participant size the district and similar size districts could possibly use the data findings for future help and success for the school. A solution for this could be to invite all parents/guardians in for a meeting to explain the group so there are no confusions or to call all the parents on the telephone to explain the group process. The researcher wonders if parents/guardians did not understand what the group was for, so because of this they did not look farther into it and didn't sign the paperwork needed. This solution may be hard to implement depending on the amount of students involved in the study.

The researcher did not have a control group, which could be another limitation. Therefore, there was no way to tell if the results would have been similar if there was no intervention. A possible solution for future researchers would be for the researcher to add a control group to the study to examine if the results would be similar or not without an intervention. Also, the post-inventories were administered immediately after the last group session. Thus, the longevity of the results cannot be determined from this study, meaning it is

hard to tell if the students were able to take the learning of self-control and implement it days, weeks, and months after. Time permitting, the researcher could have conducted a follow-up assessment. A way of doing this would have been after spring break having the participants come in one more time to discuss the group process and have them complete a follow-up assessment that was created by the researcher.

Another limitation would be the amount of participants with Individual Educational Plans versus participants without Individual Educational Plans. In this study 4 participants had IEPs while 2 participants did not have IEPs. The small sample size makes it difficult to generalize between students with Individual Educational Plans and students without Individual Educational Plans. This was a limitation because it was hard to generalize whether a larger group of IEP students versus non IEP students would have the same findings that came from the study done at this school. It would be beneficial for future researchers to look at a more even number of students with IEPs versus students without IEPs. A possible solution to this could be inviting a larger target size to participate in the group, and attempting to have more students with IEPs join too. The researcher believes inviting a larger target size is feasible but getting all the parent consent forms may still be hard to accomplish.

The last limitation in this study would be the element of time in relation to the school year and the half hour lunch time. Because the study was done in a school the calendar year is a limitation in the ability to schedule 6 weeks of psychoeducational groups. This was because there were holidays, conference days, and snow days that could get in the way of 6 weeks in a row for the psychoeducational group, thus leading to gaps in the time frame and availability to meet with the students. Also in relation to time would be the half hour time limit of lunch. By the time the participants got their lunches and meet in the counseling center conference room

there was usually only twenty five minutes for instruction. Future researchers may want to extend the time of the psychoeducational group to enhance learning.

### **Implications**

Although the data did not demonstrate significant findings, the data was promising. The researcher suggests that the results may have been significant if there were more participation because the school districts would have a better understanding of a bigger sample size of students. This psychoeducational group on self-control only consisted of six participants. This study is important for school counselors who work with middle school students because everyone can continue to identify and enhance their self-control. Research shows middle school students struggle with understanding and implementing self-control in school and their everyday lives (Romer et al., 2010). The more information and group work school counselors can give hopefully the more beneficial students will be in implementing self-control. Another aspect in why this study is important for middle school counselors is because it allows more opportunities for group work and peer relationship building. A counseling group may give students the opportunity to build relationships with other students they don't normally talk to, and learn how to talk to other students and respect others even if they are not best friends.

Another future implication would be implementing a follow up questionnaire or assessment to check in with the participants. This follow up may give future researchers a better look into whether or not the psychoeducational groups are enhancing self-control within middle school students. Another implication that may help researchers would be using multiple inventories to help identify participant's self-control. By implementing more inventories the goal would be to see if more data collected would be helpful to identify enhanced self-control.

The last implication for future research would be a longer time frame for the researcher and participants in the psychoeducational groups. The reason behind this would be to implement more self-control lessons, activities, discussion, etc. for participants. Although the 6 week psychoeducational group was found to be 33% effective for students increased scores, the researcher believes more information on self-control and additional psychoeducational groups would be beneficial.

### **Conclusion**

Self-Control is defined by Webster dictionary as the ability to control oneself, in particular one's emotions and desires, especially in difficult situations. Self-Control is also identified in theoretical articles as four major domains which are controlling thoughts, emotions, impulses, and performance (Tangney, 2004). In this study the researcher worked with six middle school students for 6 weeks in a psychoeducational group. The researcher focused the group on self-control. The students spent 4 weeks learning about different aspects of self-control and spend the first and last week's performing a pre and post-test to examine their self-control levels. The study was found to be effective as 33% of participant scores increased between pre and post-tests. The researcher believes participants are now better able to identify and control oneself in difficult situations, as well as be able to talk through the situations more accurately. Self-Control is a skill people use all through their lives, and the researcher hopes the study done at this school will help the participants in their future school years and in all aspects of their lives to gain more awareness of their self-control. The study was important because everyone needs to implement self-control in their lives at some point. Helping students understand what self-control is and how to implement it daily will be a lifelong usage. Helping students identify times when they didn't use self-control and when they did helps them become aware of it and helps them use it

more often. This study also promoted peer discussion and relationship building. Students learned how to discuss self-control with their peers and learned to understand peers better and listen to their experiences. This group also validated student's experiences and helped students to realize they are not alone in certain situations. The study helped students become aware of self-control and began to learn how to implement it in their lives. This is important because it is something they will use for the rest of their lives, so teaching and implementing it at a young age will hopefully help them grow and prosper.

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## Appendix

## 10-Item Self-Scoring Self-Control Scale

First, please read the following 10 statements and for each, check the box that best represents you.

	Not at all like me	A little like me	Some what like me	Mostly Like Me	Very much like me
I have a hard time breaking bad habits.	5	4	3	2	1
I get distracted easily.	5	4	3	2	1
I say inappropriate things.	5	4	3	2	1
I refuse things that are bad for me, even if they are fun.	1	2	3	4	5
I'm good at resisting temptation.	1	2	3	4	5
People would say that I have very strong self-discipline.	1	2	3	4	5
Pleasure and fun sometimes keep me from getting work done.	5	4	3	2	1
I do things that feel good in the moment but regret later on.	5	4	3	2	1
Sometimes I can't stop myself from doing something, even if I know it is wrong.	5	4	3	2	1
I often act without thinking through all the alternatives.	5	4	3	2	1

Next, add up all the points for the checked boxes and divide by 10. The maximum score on this scale is 5 (extremely self-controlled), and the lowest scale on this scale is 1 (not at all self-controlled).