

The role of strategic attention deployment in development of self-regulation: Predicting preschoolers' delay of gratification from mother–toddler interactions.

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Abstrak

Toddlers' use of effective attention deployment strategies to cope with separation from the mother and with maternal behavior predicted the use of effective delay-of-gratification strategies at age 5, even though the contexts, measures, and manifest behaviors were different. Toddlers who used distraction strategies during a brief separation from the mother were able, at age 5, to delay immediate gratification longer for more valued rewards. Toddlers who explored at a distance from a controlling mother when she tried to engage the child also delayed longer and used more effective delay strategies at age 5, compared with toddlers who did not distance themselves. Toddlers whose mothers were not controlling showed the opposite pattern: Those who did not distance themselves from the mother's bids had longer preschool delay times and more effective strategies. Strategic attention deployment was shown to be an enduring self-regulatory skill visible in early development across domains, measures, and over time.