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Up and down, and up and down: Fluctuations in self-regulation and well-being of individuals and close relationship partners in daily life

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Personal accomplishment and success are heavily determined by an individual's self-regulation. Self-regulation encompasses the ability to strive for long-term goals and orchestrate one's thoughts, feelings and actions in a way that benefits those long-term goals over conflicting short-term temptations. High self-regulation on a trait level—that is, across time and contexts—is associated with numerous positive outcomes across the life span, such as increased intrapersonal and interpersonal well-being. For example, individuals with high vs. low trait self-regulation report to be happier and more satisfied with their lives, and they fare better in their close relationships. However, irrespective of such between-person differences (i.e., some individuals having higher trait self-regulation than others), each individual experiences dynamic changes in their self-regulation in everyday life. While such state-level fluctuations have received some theoretical and empirical consideration in the past, research has not yet fully identified under which circumstances individuals present such ups and downs in self-regulation. Therefore, this dissertation aimed to consider both, between-person differences, and daily within-person fluctuations in self-regulation and to investigate links between self-regulation and personal well-being (i.e., affective well-being, life satisfaction), as well relational well-being (i.e., interaction quality, closeness) across both these levels of analysis. To this end, this dissertation refers to three empirical studies applying ambulatory assessment methodology in three independent samples (Study 1: $N = 64$ undergraduate students, Study 2: $N = 70$ parent-child dyads, and Study 3: $N = 53$ intimate relationship couples). These studies largely confirm the assumption that self-regulation is positively linked to personal well-being. However, more diverse result patterns emerged regarding the association of self-regulation and relational well-being across the samples of parent-child, as well as intimate relationship dyads. In conclusion, when studying self-regulation in close relationships, this dissertation suggests the need to consider the interplay between (1) variations in self-regulation between and within individuals, (2) individual and dyadic effects of self-regulation on psychological well-being, (3) dispositional and situational determinants of self-regulation, (4) different processes related to self-regulation, and (5) different individual and relationship processes determining personal and relational well-being. This should advance the development of tailored self-regulation interventions to enhance psychosocial functioning of individuals embedded in their close relational ties, rather than in isolation of their surroundings.