Willpower, behavior therapy, and the public.
Knapp, John R; Delprato, Dennis J.

AB Assessed the degree to which laypersons adhere to the culturally transmitted assumption that the internal force of willpower is necessary to overcome 24 different behavioral problems. 465 residents (mean age 26.95 yrs) rated their agreement with the assertion that willpower is necessary on a 7-point scale. Willpower was rated as more necessary for overcoming self-indulgence problems (e.g., alcoholism and smoking) and certain non-self-indulgent problems (e.g., shyness and fear of flying) than for overcoming psychopathological problems (e.g., nervous breakdown and hallucinations) and ability deficits (e.g., inability to swim and poor mathematical ability). Rated agreement of the necessity of willpower was unrelated to years of education, number of psychology classes completed, whether or not the respondent ever attended a college, and particular college attended. These findings support a potential source of conflict between the behavior therapist and the client with respect to the determinants of behavior.