

LOG ID	BOOK REFERENCE	RCT FILTER	CONFIDENCE TIER
SEC 10.1.3	CHAPTER 10: HARDENED INFRASTRUCTURE (Chaos Engineering)	ON	CONSENSUS

AUDITED CLAIM

AFFECTIVE RAM EXPANSION (CROSS-DOMAIN REGULATION)

SYSTEMS MODEL — AS STATED IN THE BOOK

Clinically, practicing targeted **affective control** and **distress tolerance** in one domain strengthens specific prefrontal networks, allowing that enhanced emotion-regulation capacity to effectively transfer to unrelated tasks.

VALIDATION QUERY

Does practicing targeted affective control, emotion regulation, or distress tolerance in one specific domain transfer to improved emotional regulation capacity across unrelated tasks or stressors?

EMPIRICAL FINDING

Cognitive neuroscience literature clarifies that while generic "willpower" exercises do not reliably upgrade global self-control, targeted affective control training does produce cross-domain transfer. Practicing distress tolerance and emotion regulation during a behavioral restriction strengthens specific prefrontal and anterior cingulate networks, effectively improving the capacity to regulate emotional reactivity across diverse, unrelated cognitive and social stressors.

PRIMARY ANCHORS

- Daros et al., 2021, Nature Human Behaviour
- Schweizer et al., 2013, The Journal of Neuroscience

ABOUT THIS RECORD

Each claim in the book is decompiled from its IT metaphor into a naked, falsifiable scientific claim, then anchored to a **primary peer-reviewed source**. Claim and anchor are queried against the Consensus academic database (200M+ papers) under a fixed protocol — top-tier **Q1/Q2 journals only**, preprints excluded, human studies only. If a hypothesis fails the audit, the build is rejected: the AI generates the syntax; the peer-reviewed grid validates the physics.

CONFIDENCE TIERS

- ☒ **CONSENSUS** ◀ **this log** — broadly established, highly replicated mechanics.
- ☒ **EMERGING** — plausible, actively researched; no universal consensus yet.
- ☐ **EXPERIMENTAL** — contested, extrapolated, or purely theoretical.

RCT FILTER — Controlled Studies is ON for interventions (a forced action must beat a control) and OFF for mechanisms (so foundational neuroscience isn't blocked).

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Yes, targeted emotion regulation practice often transfers across tasks, but transfer is incomplete and context-dependent.

1. Introduction

Practicing targeted affective control, emotion regulation, or distress tolerance in one domain does often transfer to improved emotional regulation in other tasks or stressors, but the transfer is usually modest, selective, and vulnerable to context. Across this corpus, the strongest support comes from randomized trials and meta-analyses showing that training general emotion-regulation skills, executive control, mindfulness, or emotional working memory can improve broader regulation outcomes, reduce rumination, or buffer later stress outside the original training task (Daros et al., 2021; Antuña-Cambor et al., 2024; Schweizer et al., 2013; McMahon et al., 2025).

The same literature also shows important limits. Some trainings produce only near transfer, not far transfer, some benefits appear only for self-report or subjective distress rather than physiology, and acute stress can abolish previously learned cognitive regulation in a new context (Vanderhasselt et al., 2020; McMahon et al., 2025; Raio et al., 2013). Transfer is stronger when the training targets broad underlying control processes or explicitly supports real-world application, and weaker when the trained skill is narrow, underdosed, or tested in populations with low baseline impairment (Sánchez-López et al., 2020; Laure et al., 2024; Volkaert et al., 2019).

Does practicing targeted affective control, emotion regulation, or distress tolerance in one specific domain transfer to improved emotional regulation capacity across unrelated tasks or stressors?

Requires at least 5 papers that directly answer your question. Try adjusting your query to find more papers.

FIGURE 1 Research consensus on emotion regulation transfer effects

The meter should read as a qualified yes. The literature supports cross-context transfer more often than not, but the gains are neither universal nor robust across every outcome domain, especially under acute stress or when transfer is tested against demanding far-transfer benchmarks (Daros et al., 2021; Blanco et al., 2023; Vanderhasselt et al., 2020; Raio et al., 2013).

2. Methods

This Deep Search synthesis was run over more than 170 million research papers indexed in Consensus, spanning Semantic Scholar, PubMed, and additional scholarly sources. The search process identified 395,729 initially relevant records for the core query, expanded through targeted searches on transfer, generalization, stress, executive control, and adjacent self-regulation constructs. Citation crawling from seed papers added 2,053 related papers.

Machine-learned relevance filtering screened 240 papers, of which 166 were judged eligible after deduplication and relevance review. The final synthesis included the 50 highest-ranked controlled human studies provided here, emphasizing randomized trials, meta-analyses, mechanistic studies, and papers explicitly testing generalization beyond the trained task.

Search Strategy

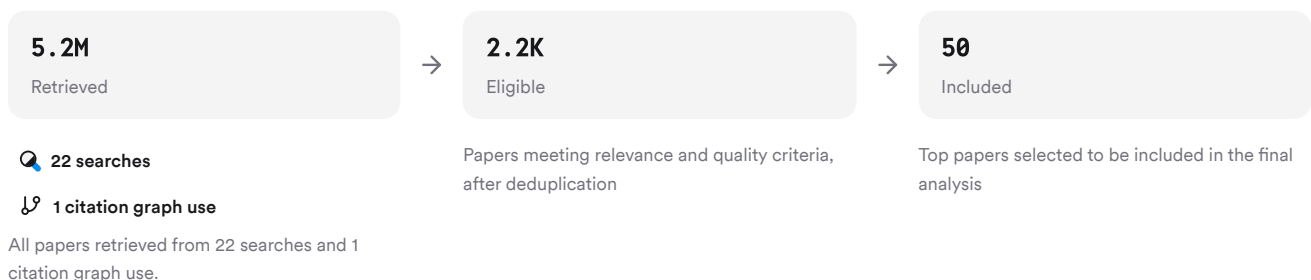


FIGURE 2 Paper identification and screening workflow

The strategy combined direct transfer queries, null-result searches, adjacent mechanism searches, and citation expansion to capture both positive and limiting evidence.

3. Results

3.1 Key Papers

Three papers anchor this literature because they directly test transfer from trained control processes to emotion regulation, quantify broad treatment effects on emotion regulation across many trials, or identify real-world failures of transfer under stress (Schweizer et al., 2013; Daros et al., 2021; Raio et al., 2013).

Paper	Summary
(Schweizer et al., 2013)	Emotional WM training improved a gold-standard regulation measure (Schweizer et al., 2013)
(Laure et al., 2024)	90 RCTs showed ER skill gains across treatments (Daros et al., 2021)
(Long et al., 2020)	Acute stress blocked transfer of learned regulation (Raio et al., 2013)

FIGURE 3 Foundational papers on transfer and limits

3.2 Cross-Domain Transfer

Direct evidence for far transfer exists across several intervention types. Emotional working-memory training improved a separate emotion-regulation task in healthy adults, showing transfer beyond the trained paradigm (Schweizer et al., 2013). In anxious individuals, both general and emotional working-memory training improved explicit regulation, while the emotional version additionally improved implicit control on an emotional Stroop task (Pan et al., 2020).

Attention-focused interventions show a similar pattern. Online contingent attention training improved cognitive biases and those changes transferred to reduced rumination and anxiety during major stressors such as final exams and lockdown (Blanco et al., 2023). Habituation reminders paired with one laboratory exposure reduced subjective distress during a different stressor one week later and also helped in daily-life distress episodes, indicating transfer across both time and context (McMahon et al., 2025).

Domain transfer also appears when emotion-regulation training improves non-emotional outcomes. In adolescent students, group emotion-regulation training increased social problem-solving and lowered social anxiety, with effects persisting at follow-up (Akbari et al., 2025). In caregivers of patients with schizophrenia, emotion-regulation training increased resilience, suggesting gains generalized from taught regulation strategies to broader coping capacity (Behrouian et al., 2021).

3.3 Boundary Conditions

Dimension	Positive Evidence	Limiting Evidence	Citations
Stress context	Training can buffer major stressors	Acute stress can abolish learned regulation	(Blanco et al., 2023; Raio et al., 2013)
Outcome type	Subjective distress often improves	Physiology often changes less	(McMahon et al., 2025)
Transfer distance	Near and moderate far transfer observed	Some unrelated tasks show no transfer	(Schweizer et al., 2013; Vanderhasselt et al., 2020)
Training breadth	Multiskill programs show broader gains	Single or brief skills often fade	(Smith et al., 2023; Volkaert et al., 2019)

Dimension	Positive Evidence	Limiting Evidence	Citations
Individual variation	High responders gain more	Effects vary substantially by efficacy	(Li et al., 2025)

FIGURE 4 Conditions shaping transfer across studies

The most consistent boundary condition is that transfer is outcome-specific. Several studies show broader gains in self-reported emotion regulation, rumination, resilience, or distress, but weaker or absent effects on physiology, unrelated cognitive tasks, or emotional expression (McMahon et al., 2025; Vanderhasselt et al., 2020; Molavi et al., 2020).

3.4 Intervention Breadth and Mechanism

Broad, transdiagnostic programs repeatedly improved general emotion-regulation capacity across populations. Meta-analyses in youth found significant reductions in emotion dysregulation and increases in adaptive engagement strategies across 90 RCTs, with symptom gains tracking ER gains (Daros et al., 2021). A separate meta-analysis in youth also found that larger reductions in emotion dysregulation correlated with larger reductions in psychopathology (Moltrecht et al., 2020).

Stand-alone and applied programs support the same conclusion. Affect Regulation Training improved acceptance, tolerance, and active modification of negative emotions in psychotherapy and workplace settings (Berking et al., 2008; Buruck et al., 2016). In depression, stand-alone ART reduced symptom severity and changes in emotion-regulation skills mediated the treatment effect (Berking et al., 2019). Lower-ranked recent studies extend this pattern to digital, educational, and compassion-based interventions, including improvements in ER plus resilience, self-compassion, or executive functioning (Brog et al., 2021; Al-Refae et al., 2021; Rojas et al., 2023; Lam & Seiden, 2020).

Results Timeline

Emotion-regulation transfer research has progressed from laboratory strategy studies to broad transdiagnostic and digital interventions.

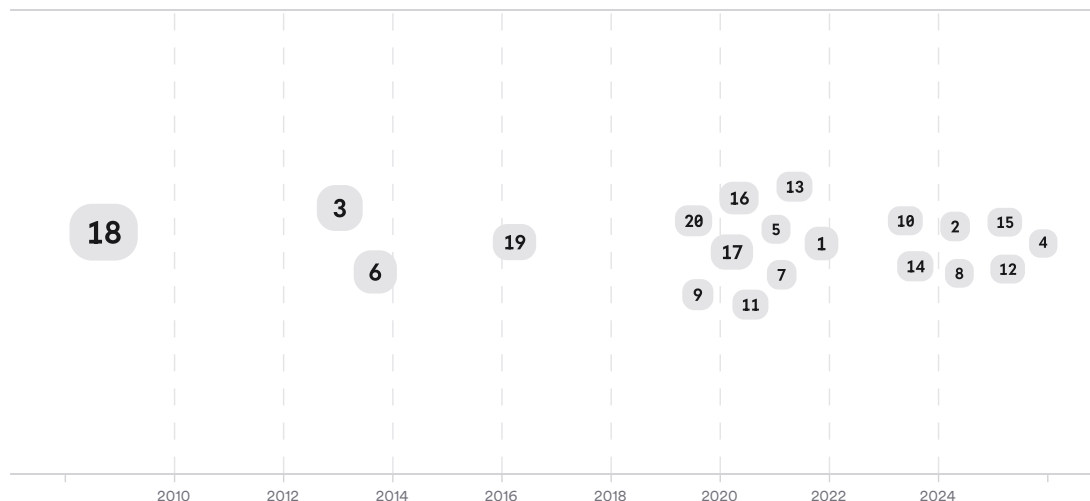


FIGURE 5 Timeline of influential transfer studies, larger markers indicate more citations

Early work established that strategies like reappraisal and suppression have distinct consequences, providing the conceptual basis for later transfer studies (Gross, 1998). The field then moved into cognitive-control and affective-training paradigms, followed by transdiagnostic RCTs, mobile interventions, and newer studies explicitly targeting generalization across contexts (Schweizer et al., 2013; Eisenstadt et al., 2021; McMahon et al., 2025).

Top Contributors

Within this corpus, **M. Berking**, **M. Vanderhasselt**, and **R. de Raedt** appear most prominently, and **Behaviour Research and Therapy**, **NeuroImage**, and **Internet Interventions** are the most recurrent journals.

Type	Name	Papers
Author	M. Berking	[2a165af254855391855b6fc8d886f33b][0b6c9344653b5415a9f71ad7261b039c] [97dd4cba54455dabb3b071b939e9aede][d462d0e45fb950a9a50ed27e742055d4]
Author	M. Vanderhasselt	[7b76f10124a15342a3e256deeda1bfba][e7bc14df4c915412ba00fbdcb0c436e7]
Author	R. de Raedt	[7b76f10124a15342a3e256deeda1bfba][e7bc14df4c915412ba00fbdcb0c436e7] [957533cb509a5fb6bfd4dfbf6c87a6fe]
Journal	<i>Behaviour Research and Therapy</i>	[2a165af254855391855b6fc8d886f33b][835923f35218552daeac1856a9e4f8df] [9f936ae35fc253418cc93f08683e27ce]
Journal	<i>NeuroImage</i>	[deeddbcb38c451848b10528e8f76e414][9e1d48245be65d99874a655410bbe321]
Journal	<i>Internet Interventions</i>	[8cc819e3bd4a56388487459fcd60d4e][e2c08672c37a530a8a7bf19049410c27] [d462d0e45fb950a9a50ed27e742055d4][b0930667e8175dd4a8205e8640a87dd1]

FIGURE 6 Authors and journals appearing most often

4. Discussion

The overall evidence supports real transfer, but mostly at a moderate level rather than as a universal principle. The strongest evidence comes from meta-analyses and randomized trials showing that interventions with varied theoretical orientations improve emotion-regulation skills and that those gains track symptom improvement across depression, anxiety, and related conditions (Daros et al., 2021; Antuña-Cambor et al., 2024). That pattern is hard to dismiss as a single-paradigm artifact because it appears in psychotherapy, digital interventions, cognitive training, neurofeedback, neuromodulation, workplace programs, and school-based prevention (Eisenstadt et al., 2021; Herwig et al., 2019; Molavi et al., 2020; Buruck et al., 2016).

At the same time, the literature does not support strong claims of broad far transfer under all conditions. Several studies are small, many rely on self-report, some lack active controls, and effects can depend on participant expectations or responder status (Long et al., 2020; Eisenstadt et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025). The most direct negative evidence shows no transfer to unrelated tasks in older adults after cognitive control training, no durable effects after brief adolescent ER training, and failure of cognitive regulation when acute stress taxes prefrontal control (Vanderhasselt et al., 2020; Volkaert et al., 2019; Raio et al., 2013).

A consistent interpretation is that transfer depends less on whether people practiced “emotion regulation” in the abstract and more on what was trained. Trainings that strengthen shared control mechanisms such as attention deployment, working memory, cognitive flexibility, acceptance, or distress tolerance show the clearest spillover (Xiu et al., 2018; Miri et al., 2025; Sharma & Singh, 2024). By contrast, narrow strategy manipulations can backfire or interfere, as shown when emotion naming impeded later reappraisal and acceptance (Nook et al., 2021).

The broader significance is practical: generalization is possible, but it must be engineered. Studies that explicitly aimed to support real-world transfer, such as mobile reminders, personalized app delivery, or multi-skill protocols, were more promising than one-off lab exercises (McMahon et al., 2025; Laure et al., 2024; Smith et al., 2023).

Claim	Evidence Strength	Reasoning	Papers
Transfer from targeted training to broader emotion regulation occurs.	 Strong	Supported by multiple RCTs, mechanistic studies, and meta-analyses across modalities.	(Schweizer et al., 2013; Daros et al., 2021; McMahon et al., 2025)

Claim	Evidence Strength	Reasoning	Papers
Transfer is usually selective, not universal.	 Moderate	Positive effects cluster in subjective regulation, rumination, and distress, with weaker evidence for physiology or unrelated tasks.	(McMahon et al., 2025; Vanderhasselt et al., 2020; Molavi et al., 2020)
Acute stress can block learned cross-context regulation.	 Moderate	Strong direct experiment, but limited replication in this corpus.	(Raio et al., 2013)
Broader multiskill or mechanism-focused interventions transfer better than narrow drills.	 Moderate	Repeated pattern across ART, mindfulness, WM, and flexibility training, but few direct head-to-head tests.	(Buruck et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2023; Sharma & Singh, 2024)
All emotion-labeling or single-step practices facilitate later regulation.	 Weak	Direct counterevidence shows naming can impair later reappraisal and acceptance.	(Nook et al., 2021)

FIGURE 7 Key claims and supporting evidence strengths

5. Conclusion

The literature answers the question with a qualified yes. Practicing targeted affective control, emotion regulation, or distress tolerance in one domain often improves emotional regulation in other tasks or later stressors, but the effect is usually partial, depends on the mechanism trained, and weakens under stress or difficult far-transfer tests (McMahon et al., 2025; Daros et al., 2021; Raio et al., 2013).

The field is strongest where it shows convergence across methods and populations, and weakest where it asks whether gains generalize to physiology, long follow-up periods, or highly novel stressors. That is why the fairest summary is not “transfer always happens,” but “transfer is real, moderate, and conditional” (Eisenstadt et al., 2021; Norman-Nott et al., 2024; Sharma & Singh, 2024).

Research Gaps

The main gaps are long-term far-transfer tests, objective markers, and direct comparisons between narrow and multiskill interventions.

Topic/Outcome	RCT evidence	Objective measures	Long follow-up	Cross-stressor transfer
Working-memory or control training	6	5	2	3
Mindfulness and compassion training	8	2	4	3
Clinical transdiagnostic ER programs	10	3	6	2

Topic/Outcome	RCT evidence	Objective measures	Long follow-up	Cross-stressor transfer
Neuromodulation and neurofeedback	5	6	2	2

Open Research Questions

Future work should test when transfer breaks, not just whether average scores improve.

Question	Why
Which training ingredients most reliably produce far transfer to unrelated real-world stressors?	Most studies bundle skills, so the active ingredients behind durable cross-context transfer remain unclear.
Do self-reported transfer effects match physiological and behavioral regulation in daily life?	Subjective gains are common, but objective evidence is thinner and often inconsistent across paradigms.
How much acute stress can a trained regulation skill withstand before transfer fails?	Stress appears to disrupt learned regulation, making this a central boundary condition for real-world usefulness.

Practicing targeted affective control does transfer across unrelated stressors often enough to matter, but not strongly enough to count on without context.

These search results were found and analyzed using Consensus, an AI-powered search engine for research. Try it at <https://consensus.app>. © 2026 Consensus NLP, Inc. Personal, non-commercial use only; redistribution requires copyright holders' consent.

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