The Batman Effect!
How Self-distancing can help your Child be the best version of himself.

In this article, we explore the benefits of self-distancing on young children and how it can impact their success in life.

Would you believe me if I told you that: Beyonce, Gerard Butler and Pharrell Williams among other world-class celebrities are extremely shy? You wouldn't believe me!

The reality is: they are known to be very shy and for them to gain immense confidence, they all use self-distancing through creation of an alter-ego (another persona).

You might be asking yourself now, **what is self-distancing? What's an alter-ego? And what does it have to do with children?**

What is self-distancing?

Is a skill that enables increasing the psychological distance from yourself (i.e. taking an outsider's view of one's own situation.

It involves several aspects including:

- Changing the way, you assess events (from an outsider's view).

- Helps detaching from negative emotions.

- You can create self-distance by modifying the language that you use during times of introspection, and specifically by referring to yourself in the second or third person (e.g. "what should you do?" or "what should John do?") instead of "what should I do?".

- Self-distancing also enables creation of a parallel alter-ego instinct from a person's normal or true original personality

What is an alter-ego?

Alter-ego in Latin means "other I" and it's an alternative self-created to be distinct from a person's normal or true original personality. For example, Beyonce's alter-ego was Sasha Fierce "a super-confident impressive character that took over the stage and allowed her to be the best version of herself.

Now since we got that out of the way we can explore the impact of self-distance on children and how it can help them become better at everything they do.

Self-distancing for Children

In this article, we are going to explore the study "The Batman Effect": Improving Perseverance in Young Children by R. E. White – University of Pennsylvania 2016.

This study investigated the benefits of self-distancing on 180 young children's perseverance skills (4-6 years old).

Children were asked to complete a repetitive task for 10 min **while having the option to take breaks by playing an extremely attractive video game**.

Surprisingly, **children who impersonated an exemplar other**—in this case a character, such as Batman—**spent the most time working**, followed by children who took a third-person perspective on the self, or finally, a first-person perspective.

Why is perseverance so important?

Perseverance/persistence is extremely important for children's development. An example would be a child trying to spell letters and words in his way towards learning how to read or to speak.

This skill can truly help children stand out from their peers. This extends even beyond to the future: a college student trying to decipher a scientific anomaly all the way to differentiating relentless IT experts solving complex problem in the workplace.

The Batman Effect study overview

The study investigated the effects of self-distancing on perseverance in 4- and 6-year-old children through a controlled environment that measured modern self-control.

The option to do work that is beneficial in the long run but tedious in the moment, or to indulge in a pleasurable distraction.

Children were asked to be a "good helper" by completing a boring activity on a computer: an extended, and therefore particularly tedious, version of a computerized go/no-go task.

At the same time, they were given the option to take a break if and when they wanted by playing entertaining games on a nearby iPad.

Following to that children were divided into groups where:

Group 1 the self-immersed condition – Children we requested to ask themselves the question, "Am I working hard?"

Group 2 the third-person condition - Children were told to use their own name to ask themselves the question, "Is [child's name] working hard?"

Group 3: the alter-ego condition – Children were told to select and dress up like a superhero character (e.g., Batman). They were then told to ask themselves the question, "Is [character's name/Batman] working hard?"

Study Findings
Findings were a remarkable indicator of the impact of self-distancing on the productivity of children, below table demonstrates the outcomes for time spent on the productive task for each group.
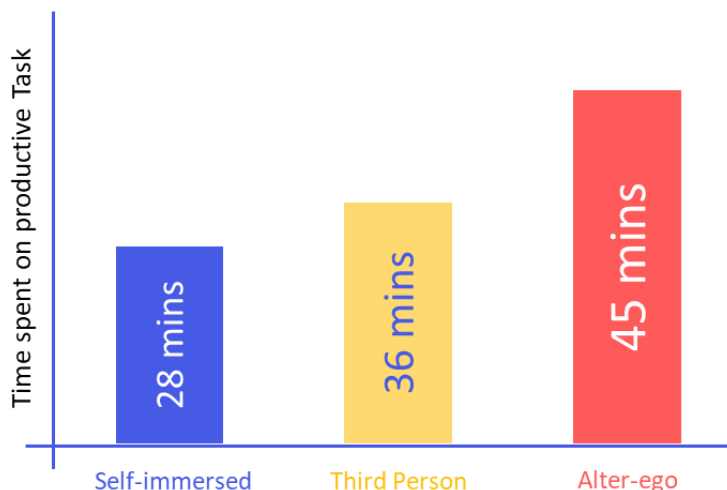
Simply put, Children who adopted an alter-ego of their favourite superhero while working on the productive task were +64% more productive than self-immersed children.

Tips to teaching your child perseverance

Perseverance can pave the pathway to success for children now and in the future. Although it is highlighted that in teaching perseverance as a skill can be difficult yet play remains the most effective method.

The current research suggests that perseverance can be taught through multiple ways, here are some tips to put into practice:

1. **Model perseverance**: Demonstrate to your child how to set realistic goals with a suitable time frame (example: Sharing with them steps and failures before reaching a personal goal).

2. **Don't jump to help:** if you see your child struggling with a task, give them sometime while uploading their effort before you help out

3. **Remind them of their achievements:** Talk about a time when they accomplished something, highlight the persistence it took to achieve it.

4. **Celebrate small & big wins:** while highlighting the difference "Amazing, now you know how to write all letters, next amazing thing is that you will be able to write a word"

5. **Allow them to give up:** If something doesn't have any benefit, don't force them to persevere for the sake of it. Keep the skill of persevering as a positive endeavour.

Sources:

"The Batman Effect": Improving Perseverance in Young Children by R. E. White – University of Pennsylvania 2016

https://mindsofwonder.com/2020/06/01/12-steps-to-teaching-your-child-perseverance/