CHAPTER FIVE

bears the most. This rebound effect carries some disturbing consequences for those engaged in mental control. Although people may initially succeed at keeping unwanted thoughts from coming to mind, they may experience a resurgence of those thoughts once their vigilance wanes. Fortunately, the effect does not occur under all circumstances and is rather short-lived (A. E. Kelly & Kahn, 1994; Liberman & Förster, 2000; Wegner & Gold, 1995; Wegner et al., 1987).

2. Emotional Regulation: Hiding One’s Feelings

In addition to controlling their thoughts, people also try to regulate their emotions. Familiar sayings like “Stay cool,” “Don’t wear your heart on your sleeve,” and “Keep your emotions in check” emphasize the importance our culture places on this ability. Emotional regulation doesn’t come without a cost, however. Concealing what we feel requires energy and creates stress. In one investigation, J. M. Richards and Gross (2000) instructed some participants to hide their feelings while viewing photographs of gruesome scenes (e.g., graphic pictures of accident victims). Compared to participants who were not told to hide their feelings, those who did exhibited higher levels of physiological arousal and poorer memory for what they had seen. These findings support the claim that emotional suppression is a psychologically demanding task that requires psychological energy (see also Gross & Levenson, 1993; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000; Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998; J. M. Richards & Gross, 1999).

3. Behavioral Control: Resisting Temptation

That emotional suppression is psychologically demanding comes as no surprise to anyone who has ever tried to resist temptation. The simple fact is that choosing not to do something is often more effortful than deciding to do it. A study by Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, and Tice (1998) illustrates this point. Most of the participants in this study signed up for an experiment involving a taste test. Upon entering the laboratory, they saw two plates: one filled with freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, the other full of radishes. Half of the participants were told they could eat the cookies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Express first/then suppress</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppress first/then express</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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FIGURE 5.11
Rebound Effects Following Thought Suppression
Participants who initially tried to suppress thoughts of a white bear thought about a white bear even more once suppression had been lifted. These findings suggest that thought suppression can sometimes produce a rebound effect.