

# Appendix Z

## Self-Control Mitigators for *GURPS Fourth Edition*

by Kelly Pedersen

The Mitigator limitation in *GURPS Fourth Edition* is a very useful one; it allows characters with "controllable" disadvantages to be built more easily. The nearsighted professor with his spectacles, the terminally ill hero holding off death with an experimental drug regimen, the mad scientist compensating for his blindness with a camera implanted in his brain -- Mitigator covers it all. However, one area Mitigator does not represent well is the disadvantage that is reduced, but not eliminated. This is particularly relevant to disadvantages with self-control rolls. In fiction and reality, drugs, esoteric treatments, or technological devices can often help a character cope with their personality problems, but total removal of those problems is rather less common. This rules variant aims to compensate for this hole in the *GURPS* rules, providing guidelines for Mitigators that help you deal with your problem, rather than simply eliminating it.

A Self-Control Mitigator acts much like a normal Mitigator -- as long as the character continues to use the drug, device, etc., the disadvantage that the Mitigator applies to is reduced in effect. However, instead of simply removing the effects of the disadvantage, the Self-Control Mitigator provides a bonus to all self-control rolls the character makes.

There are three levels of Self-Control Mitigator, providing +3, +6, and +9 to self-control rolls respectively. The value of the limitation, like a regular Mitigator, depends on how easy the mitigating condition is to use. The limitation values for the various levels of Self-Control Mitigators are as follows:

### **+3 to self-control rolls**

*Daily drug/breakable device: -40%*

*Weekly drug: -45%*

*Monthly drug: -50%*

### **+6 to self-control rolls**

*Daily drug/breakable device: -50%*

*Weekly drug: -55%*

*Monthly drug: -60%*

### **+9 to self-control rolls**

*Daily drug/breakable device: -60%*

*Weekly drug: -65%*

*Monthly drug: -70%*

These values are further modified by the other conditions from the standard Mitigator limitation: +5% if the Mitigator requires a special prescription, or +10% if the Mitigator is only available from one specific source.

*Example:* "Knuckles" Johnson suffers from serious anger management issues; he has Bad Temper with a self-control number of 6, worth -20 points. After one too many brawls end up with someone seriously hurt, a judge orders Knuckles to undergo therapy. In the course of his counseling, the psychiatrist suggests that Knuckles try a new anti-aggression drug. Desperate to stay out of prison, Knuckles agrees. The drug grants +6 to self-control rolls; it must be taken daily and requires a prescription, for a total limitation value of -45%. Knuckles' self-control number on Bad Temper is now effectively 12, and the disadvantage is now worth -11 points.

Of course, a character can still spend points in order to improve his self-control number independently of the Mitigator. In this case, the Self-Control Mitigator's bonus will simply apply to the new self-control number, making it all the more likely that he will resist his disadvantage.

*Example:* After a couple years of counseling, Knuckles has successfully reduced his aggressive impulses; his self-control number is now 9. He still takes the drug, however, since his psychiatrist is not yet convinced that Knuckles will never throw another punch in anger. His self-control number with the drug is effectively 15, and the Mitigated disadvantage is worth -8 points.

Using Self-Control Mitigators, it is quite possible to have a self-control number of 18 or higher. In this case, the character still fails self-control rolls on an 18. In addition, circumstances can impose penalties that bring a character's self-control roll down to more easily-failed levels. This distinguishes disadvantages that have been brought to only -1 point by Self-Control Mitigators from quirks; these should not be counted against the campaign quirk limit, if one is imposed.

*Example:* A decade after his original brush with the legal system, Knuckles has almost totally overcome his anger-management problems. His player has paid points to raise his self-control modifier to 15, and a new drug has come on the market that is even more effective than Knuckles' original prescription: it adds +9 to the self-control roll, and only needs to be taken monthly, for a limitation value of -65% (it still needs a prescription). Knuckles effectively resists his Bad Temper on a 24 or less, for a point value of -1.

However, it has been a very bad day for Knuckles; when he got to work, he was informed that he was being fired as part of a downsizing, his girlfriend left him a break-up message on his answering machine, and he got a letter from the IRS, informing him that he owes \$500 in back taxes. For the past two hours, Knuckles has been drinking in his favorite bar, and he is now tipsy (-2 to self-control rolls). And someone has just knocked over his drink into his lap, and then insulted his hat. The GM rules that the general circumstances of the day, combined with Knuckles' tipsy condition, result in a -10 penalty to his self-control roll, for an effective target of 14. Knuckles' player rolls - and gets a 15. Oops. Looks like it's a trip to the emergency room for the idiot who bothered our hero, and back to therapy for Knuckles.

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Article publication date: December 8, 2006

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