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Self-Patience: A Generative Theoretical Approach

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ABSTRACT

Pursuing a goal often requires sustained effort and commitment, sometimes for longer than one hoped or expected. When people face delays in achieving their goals, they may become impatient—and when they believe they are the cause of those delays, they may feel impatient with themselves. In this paper, we present a novel theoretical approach to understanding such moments of self-impatience, adapted from the *process model of patience*. This approach positions self-impatience as an emotional response to self-caused delays that are unreasonable or inappropriate. To be patient with oneself, then, means to successfully regulate the feeling or consequences of self-impatience. We outline our theoretical model of self-patience, the *process model of self-patience*, highlighting where it overlaps with and deviates from the original model. We then close with suggestions for future research that derive from our theoretical proposals.

1 | Introduction

Many of life's pursuits require sustained effort toward goals that are not yet in reach. Sometimes people reach their goals quickly, even more quickly than anticipated—but often, people underestimate just how long it will take to get where they want to go (e.g., Buehler et al. 2010). Imagine a person, let's call them Merrill, who is planning an extended visit to Peru. Merrill knows almost no Spanish, so they dedicate 1 year prior to their trip to learn Peru's dominant language. Six months later, Merrill is still stuck on Spanish basics and feels a growing sense of impatience as they fail to make progress as quickly as hoped. If Merrill is to continue on their path to fluency, they will need to either channel those feelings of impatience into redoubled effort or find ways to manage the feelings and carry on despite their disappointing progress.

In this paper, we propose an approach to understanding the process of being patient with oneself in such moments, the *process model of self-patience*, adapted from a recent theoretical take on patience more broadly (Sweeny 2025a). This adapted model is not a unique theory per se; instead, the process of model of self-patience is one example of how the broader model can be tailored to specific contexts in which impatience arises and patience may be desirable or necessary (see Table 1 for specific additions/distinctions). We first provide a brief overview of the field's current understanding of patience and self-patience specifically, then turn to the tenets of the process model of self-patience, address areas of conceptual overlap and distinction with self-compassion, and close with a consideration of unanswered questions and fruitful directions for future research.

2 | Theoretical Background

Although we know of little theoretical or empirical work on self-patience specifically, the topic of patience has been of interest across several fields and literally thousands of years. Aristotle conceived of patience as a virtue, a “golden mean” between the vices of recklessness and passivity (Aristotle 1955; Ratchford et al. 2024). Many philosophers have followed in that tradition and provided deep analysis of what exactly patience entails and what it means for patience to be a virtue (e.g., Pianalto 2016), though a consensus has remained elusive (e.g., Pianalto and

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TABLE 1 | Theoretical predictions specific to self-patience.

	Process model of self-patience	Process model of patience (general)
Impatience		
Appraisal	Self-caused objectionable delay	Any objectionable delay
Expression	Mental agitation, rumination, self-talk	Psychomotor and/or mental agitation
Person-level predictors (non-exhaustive)	Neuroticism, need for closure, narcissism, perfectionism, self-compassion, self-esteem	Narcissism, need for closure
Patience		
Consequences	Self-kindness, restraint, perseverance	Calm composure, restraint, perseverance
Predictors of ability (non-exhaustive)	Executive function, mindfulness, emotion regulation skill/flexibility, self-complexity	Executive function, mindfulness, emotion regulation skill/flexibility
Predictors of motivation (non-exhaustive)	Self-compassion, depressive symptoms	Agreeableness, empathy, need for approval

Schnitker, in press). Patience also appears in various forms in nearly every major holy book, including the Bible, the Quran, and Buddhist teachings.

In psychology, most references to patience and impatience arise in the context of studies on temporal discounting (also called intertemporal choice) in which research participants must choose between a relatively small reward now or a larger reward later (e.g., Curry et al. 2008; Dai and Fishbach 2013). Those researchers consider people to be patient if they choose to wait for the larger reward and impatient if they jump on the smaller, immediate reward. Outside of the temporal discounting literature, Schnitker and colleagues have taken a broader view of patience, pulling together concepts from virtue ethics with psychological themes of personal growth, goal setting, and well-being science (e.g., Schnitker 2012).

A recent theoretical paper introduced a model of patience as an emotion regulation process that targets the emotion of impatience (Sweeny 2025a). We will return to that model in detail later in the paper, as it serves as the theoretical foundation for our conceptualization of self-patience. For now, we simply note that our approach focuses on the who, what, when, and how of self-patience and leaves aside questions of virtuousness or spirituality. That is, we seek to understand when people are likely to become impatient with themselves in daily life, what it entails to experience self-impatience and to practice self-patience, how people engage in self-patience, and who is more or less likely to do so (i.e., individual differences).

Before we propose our take on self-patience, we want to acknowledge that although no psychological theories or research directly address self-patience (to our knowledge), a recent chapter (Kawall 2026) provides an initial overview of self-patience from a philosophical perspective, specifically through a virtue-ethics lens. As an extension of the virtue of patience, Kawall conceptualizes self-patience as a practice in which people adopt a compassionate perspective of the world and their innate limitations in order to accept self-caused burdens. These burdens (e.g., failing to quit a bad habit) manifest in self-directed anger and criticism, and thus self-patience alleviates the negative emotional impact of those self-caused burdens. In sum, Kawall argues that self-patience reduces self-directed frustration and feelings of inadequacy when people fall short of reaching their goals—and in the long-term, self-patience allows people to create realistic trajectories for how to achieve their goals, while also enabling intentional selection and modification of such goals. As described below, our approach is compatible with Kawall's but articulates the specific psychological mechanisms that lead to self-patience, as well as situational and individual factors that facilitate and inhibit its practice.

3 | A Process Model of Self-Patience

We propose an approach to understanding self-patience that adapts a recent theoretical take on patience generally: the process model of patience (Sweeny 2025a). Figure 1 presents our *process model of self-patience*, with unique aspects of the model appearing in bold. A key proposal of the original model is that impatience is an emotion that arises in response to an objectionable delay in reaching a goal, broadly defined. Put simply, people feel impatient when they perceive that something is taking "too long"—an unreasonable, inappropriate, or unfair amount of time. As noted earlier, patience, then, is the targeted emotion regulation process that tackles those feelings of impatience when they arise. Here we unpack those tenets in the context of self-caused delays.

3.1 | Self-Impatience

The top half of Figure 1 depicts the process by which feelings of self-impatience (i.e., impatience with oneself) unfold. Returning to our opening example, Merrill may be feeling impatient as they find their Spanish progress slower than hoped. Put in terms consistent with functionalist theories of emotion (Keltner and Gross 1999), we argue that Merrill's feelings of impatience arise in response to the appraisal that they are the cause of an objectionable delay in reaching their language-learning goals. Perhaps they believe that they are generally unskilled at learning languages, not putting in enough time to become fluent, or not studying in the right way. Note that although Merrill's pursuit is a long-term one, the process model of self-

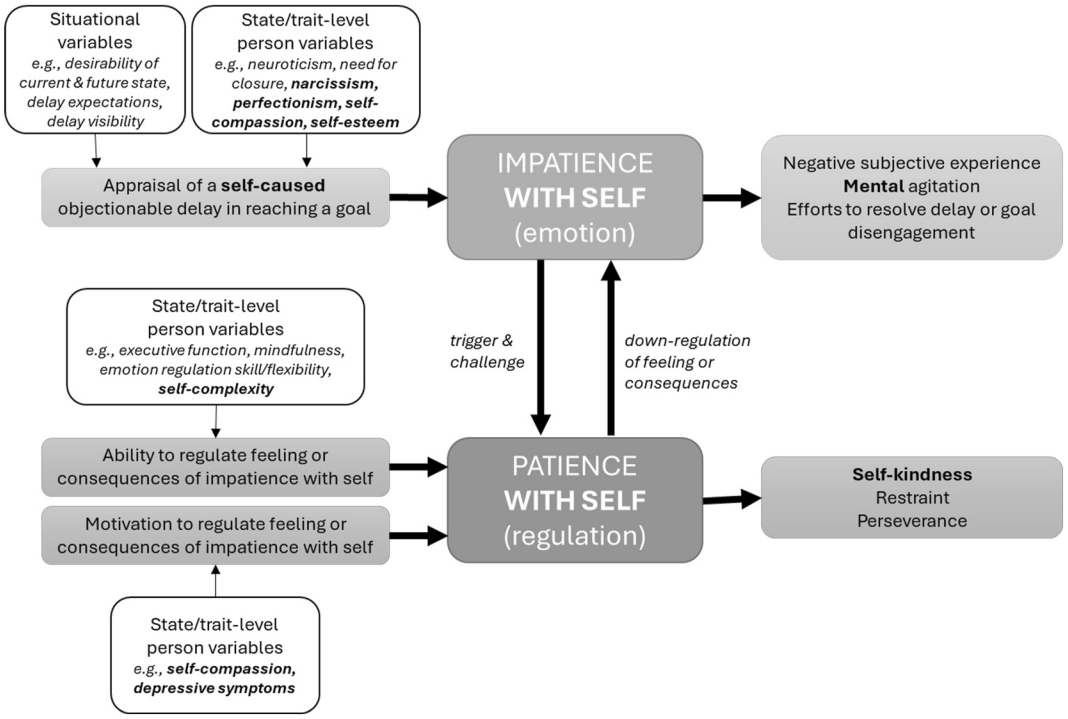

FIGURE 1 | The process model of self-patience, adapted from the process model of patience (Sweeny 2025a, *Personality & Social Psychology Review*).

patience addresses goals at all time scales. If Merrill's goal was to complete 10 Spanish lessons before leaving for work, they would likely experience self-impatience if the clock was ticking closer to 8 a.m. with only three lessons under their belt.

To be clear, we do not propose that the emotion of impatience fundamentally differs across situations of self-caused delays versus delays caused by circumstances or other people. Merrill would feel the same emotion if their slow progress was caused by constant interruptions from roommates or by glitches in their language-learning software. However, as we discuss below, the predictors and consequences of self-impatience may differ from the predictors and consequences of other sources of impatience.

Looking at the top-right of Figure 1, emotions also have characteristic expressions (Keltner et al. 2019). Impatience is expressed via psychomotor agitation (e.g., fidgeting, tapping fingers) and sometimes social forms of agitation (e.g., snapping at or interrupting someone; Hawes and Sweeny 2025; Sweeny 2025a). In the case of self-impatience, we suspect that the expression is typically more "psycho"(logical) than motoric in nature, marked by mental agitation, repetitive thoughts, and perhaps both internal and verbal self-talk.

Functionalist theories of emotion further propose that emotions carry motivations (i.e., action tendencies) that make them adaptive, evolutionarily-speaking (Zeelenberg and Pieters 2006). In the case of impatience, its action tendency is to motivate swift resolution of the delay (Sweeny 2025a). In the case of self-impatience specifically, we suspect that the action tendency is to work harder and faster to achieve one's goals. In our example, those feelings of impatience could motivate Merrill to dedicate at least 2 h a day to Spanish practice or to put a language-learning app on their phone for easy access. Though speculative, we suspect that self-impatience is most useful when clear paths to speedier goal achievement are available but not yet utilized, perhaps because the effort they require was not yet necessary or worthwhile. Self-impatience may serve as both a cue and a motivational force to search for and undertake such efforts, and it may also serve to highlight particular goals that require additional effort or attention in comparison to other goal pursuits that are proceeding in a more timely manner.

That said, impatience can also lead to impulsive or even reckless behaviors in an effort to speed up goal achievement. It is difficult to conjure dangerous ways to study Spanish, so instead imagine a person whose goal is to lose weight. Self-impatience might motivate them in positive ways (e.g., to learn more about nutrition or tweak a workout plan), but it is easy to imagine how those feelings could quickly turn harmful (e.g., by leading to extreme dieting or unsafe levels of exercise).

Alternatively, unregulated self-impatience might lead to goal disengagement rather than intensified pursuit of the goal, if the person concludes that the objectionable delay is insurmountable or the goal is not sufficiently valuable. In some cases, goal disengagement is a maladaptive response to self-impatience; however, not all goals are worth pursuing, so disengagement can be adaptive in those cases. Goal disengagement, or letting go of the effort and commitment to pursue a particular goal (Wrosch, Scheier, Carver, et al. 2003), is associated with greater well-being and less perceived stress, particularly when the goal is viewed as unattainable (Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, et al. 2003; Kappes and Schattke 2022). In this light, goal disengagement is an adaptive process because it provides an opportunity to re-engage with a new, more attainable goal (Brandstätter and

Herrmann 2016; Brandstätter and Bernecker 2022). This opportunity to re-engage with a new goal likely accounts for the positive benefits associated with goal disengagement, as removing effort and commitment from an unattainable goal while also failing to re-engage with new goals is associated with poor emotional well-being (Wrosch, Scheier, Carver, et al. 2003).

As a final piece of the impatience half of the picture, the original model proposes a non-exhaustive set of situational and individual variables that make it more likely that a person will appraise a delay as objectionable (Sweeny 2025a; Sweeny et al. 2024). We propose that many of those predictors apply to self-impatience as well, with a few additions.

Regarding situational moderators, people likely feel more self-impatience when their goal is particularly desirable or their current state is particularly undesirable, as is true of all experiences of impatience. Returning to Merrill's plight, they might feel more impatient with themself if they believe they will have to rely heavily on their Spanish during their upcoming trip to Peru (making the goal highly desirable) and less so if they will have access to a reliable translator. In our weight-loss example, the person might feel more impatient with themself if their current state creates significant functional limitations or health risks and less so if they simply wish to fit into an old pair of jeans. How a delay compares to one's expectations is also a consistent predictor of impatience (Karaman and Sweeny, under review) and likely self-impatience as well. That is, Merrill would feel more impatient with their progress if they expected to be a quick study than if they knew from the outset that progress would be slow. Finally, the degree to which the passage of time is conspicuous (e.g., a visible clock) may undermine patience broadly, though findings have been somewhat inconsistent (Sweeny et al. 2024; M. D. Wilson 2024). In the context of self-impatience, we suspect that delays in goal achievement that are more obvious or visible, perhaps due to the presence of clear performance benchmarks or social comparisons, induce more intense self-impatience than delays that could be dismissed as subjective in nature.

We note that blameworthiness is a strong predictor of impatience generally (Sweeny et al. 2024), such that people appraise a delay as more objectionable and thus feel more impatient when someone is clearly to blame for that delay. In the case of self-impatience, we suspect that the issue of blame is a constant, such that people only experience self-impatience when they believe they are to blame for a delay in reaching their goals.

Turning to person-level predictors, neuroticism (Soto and John 2017a, 2017b) and the need for closure (i.e., an aversion to unresolved or uncertain situations; Kruglanski and Fishman 2009) stand out as consistent and unique predictors of impatience generally (Sweeny et al. 2024). We suspect that the list is longer when it comes to self-impatience, given that one's appraisal of their own blameworthiness for slow progress toward a goal is likely closely intertwined with self-views more broadly. We will address the role of self-compassion in detail later in the paper; other candidate traits (broadly defined) include narcissism, perfectionism, and self-esteem.

People high in narcissism are more likely to blame something else (e.g., the difficulty of a task) rather than their own abilities in the face of failure (Stucke 2003), and they are also highly motivated to maintain the positivity of their self-concept (Sedikides et al. 2004). Thus, we anticipate that they are less likely to experience self-impatience or experience it less intensely. People with high self-esteem may also experience less self-impatience, though the pathway is a healthier one (greater satisfaction in their goal progress, less self-criticism; Di Paula and Campbell 2002) compared to those high in narcissism. In contrast, people with maladaptive perfectionism tend to feel that even their best efforts fall short and engage in high levels of self-criticism (Neff 2011; Dunkley et al. 2003), making them particularly vulnerable to self-impatience.

In sum, self-impatience shares essential qualities with other forms of impatience, most notably the characteristics of the emotion itself. However, cases of self-impatience likely differ from other cases of impatience in the specific triggering appraisal (a *self-caused* objectionable delay), expression (more internal than visible), specific action tendency (work harder faster, or perhaps smarter), and person-level predictors.

3.2 | Self-Patience

The bottom half of Figure 1 depicts the process of patience with oneself, or self-patience. We define self-patience as the regulation of the subjective experience (i.e., negative emotionality) or impulsive tendencies (e.g., recklessness, shortcuts, goal disengagement) that arise in tandem with self-impatience. This definition is consistent with the process model of patience (Sweeny 2025a), which conceptualizes patience as a targeted form of emotion regulation that tackles the experience or manifestations of impatience. To be clear, we propose that patience is a process, not a state; put another way, patience is something we do, not something we feel or express. Returning to Merrill's language-learning journey, we would describe Merrill as patient with themself if they responded to their growing impatience by attempting to downregulate those feelings or their motivational push toward impulsivity. If they do so successfully, the outcome (on the bottom right of Figure 1) is a state of self-kindness that promotes restraint and perseverance in pursuit of one's goal.

In some ways, self-patience overlaps with the concept of grit, a trait-like tendency toward passion and perseverance in pursuing long-term goals (e.g., Duckworth et al. 2007). We suspect that the process of self-patience, as outlined below, is one ingredient that contributes to grit by supporting persistence in the face of self-imposed delays. “Gritty” people may also find it easier to engage in self-patience to the extent that they are better able to regulate negative affect associated with setbacks; however, very little research has examined the emotion processes by which grit might lead to perseverance. In short, though grit and self-patience may similarly lead to persistence in goal pursuit, our approach elucidates the short-term processes by which such persistence occurs rather than focusing on trait-level tendencies toward goal pursuit broadly.

Like any form of self-regulation, the likelihood of successful regulation depends on a person's ability and motivation to regulate (bottom-left of Figure 1). Taking ability first, both the original model and the process model of self-patience recognize the relevance of transient and stable cognitive resources (e.g., fatigue and executive function, respectively) in one's ability to be patient. Both models also include emotion-regulatory skills and resources as predictors of ability. Specific to self-impatience, we suggest that self-concept complexity may bolster people's ability to successfully enact self-patience. People higher in self-concept complexity, or the number of unique facets that make up their self-concept (Linville 1985), are more resilient to stress and negative life events (Koch and Shepperd 2004). Self-concept complexity serves as a psychological buffer in the face of challenges, allowing people to compartmentalize negative events and setbacks by shifting their attention to different aspects of their self-concept that are unaffected by that negative event. In contrast, people with low self-concept complexity experience setbacks as all-encompassing (Linville 1987). Thus, self-complexity may provide more psychological "space" to tackle feelings of self-impatience in any given domain.

Turning to motivation, as noted earlier, self-impatience can be beneficial for motivating more efficient or effortful goal pursuit or for signaling that goal disengagement may be appropriate. However, self-impatience can also be an impediment to the extent that it causes psychological pain when the goal remains important and no options for speedier goal pursuit are available. That is, if Merrill is doing everything within reason to learn Spanish on a timeline that works for them, self-impatience serves little purpose. In such cases, people may be motivated to engage in self-patience to reduce the unhelpful negativity or agitation produced by self-impatience.

People also vary in their general levels of motivation to engage in patience broadly and self-patience specifically. Initial findings revealed that social motivations (e.g., agreeableness, empathy) are key in spurring people to be patient in the face of objectionable delays (Sweeny et al. 2024). However, these findings emerged in the context of delays caused by other people, or by circumstances that people might interpret as the fault of others (e.g., a delay in receiving a medical test result). In the context of self-caused delays, it may be that people are nearly always motivated to be patient with themselves, albeit to varying degrees. For example, people high in self-compassion may be particularly motivated to regulate any feelings of self-impatience that arise (Breines and Chen 2012), and people with low self-esteem or depressive symptoms may believe that their self-impatience is well-earned and appropriate rather than worthy of regulation (e.g., Ehret et al. 2014).

Regarding the mechanics of self-patience, we propose that the suite of available and effective emotion regulation strategies is more limited than in other cases of patience. Preliminary evidence suggests that people frequently use distraction as a way of managing impatience (Sweeny 2025b)—which makes sense in a waiting room or traffic, but less so when the call is coming from inside the house, so to speak. Taking Merrill's plight as illustration, they could certainly evade their feelings of self-impatience via pleasant distractions for a short period of time, but the problem of their slow progress will still be there when the distraction has run its course. Similarly, expressive suppression is an appropriate way to regulate outward expressions of impatience like physical or verbal agitation, less so when the agitation is within one's mind.

Instead, we suspect that various forms of cognitive reappraisal are the best antidote to self-impatience. Merrill could reframe their situation by remembering that "everything comes in time" or "the journey is more important than the destination." Two sources of reappraisals that may be particularly relevant to self-patience are social comparisons (Diel et al. 2021; Suls et al. 2002; Wills 1981) and temporal comparisons (Hanko et al. 2010; A. E. Wilson and Ross 2001), particularly downward comparisons. That is, comparing one's speed or progress to slower or less-accomplished others or to one's past, lesser progress can reframe a current delay as less objectionable. For example, Merrill might engage in self-patience via social comparison by thinking, "most people don't even try to learn a new language" or "at least I'm learning faster than some people I see on Duolingo." They could also engage in self-patience via temporal comparison by thinking, "I've come so far already" or "at least I know some basics to get around Peru."

In sum, like any form of patience, self-patience entails a targeted form of emotion regulation that people are more likely to employ when they have both the ability and motivation to do so. However, in cases of self-patience, intrapersonal factors (e.g., self-concept clarity, self-compassion, depression) are likely more relevant in motivating patience than social factors like agreeableness and empathy, and the process of patience is likely narrower and limited to cognitive reappraisals, including social and temporal downward comparisons.

4 | Is Self-Patience Just Self-Compassion?

As noted several times on our tour through the process model of self-patience, self-compassion is a concept with clear relevance to our endeavor. Self-compassion refers to the support and care people offer themselves in times of suffering, whether this suffering stems from external circumstances or one's own mistakes and shortcomings (Neff 2023). Extensions of this definition conceptualize self-compassion as a network consisting of three interacting components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Neff 2023). That is, practicing self-compassion involves being loving and understanding instead of critical and judgmental toward oneself (*self-kindness*), recognizing that one's suffering is a shared human experience instead of an isolated struggle (*common humanity*), and responding to one's suffering in a balanced manner that neither avoids nor ruminates on the experience (*mindfulness*). Taken together, this self-compassionate perspective allows people to accept life's difficult circumstances and alleviate their own suffering.

Given this conceptualization of self-compassion, it might seem difficult to distinguish self-compassion from self-patience, as

both concepts address how people can respond to personal challenges in a way that mitigates self-criticism and shame. In fact, two items on the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff et al. 2021) include the terms *patient* or *impatient* in reference to self-kindness ("I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like" and "I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like"). Despite this conceptual overlap, we argue that self-compassion and self-patience are distinct but connected concepts, such that each plays both an independent and an overlapping role in promoting beneficial responses to personal challenges.

In accordance with our proposed definition of self-patience, self-compassion may support people in downregulating feelings of self-impatience by fostering a perspective that makes the practice of self-patience easier. In our example of Merrill, self-patience and self-compassion could play unique but connected roles. When self-impatience arises, Merrill could engage in cognitive reappraisal to regulate those feelings, as outlined above. By reframing the situation to acknowledge that it is the journey that counts, that everything comes in time, they can downregulate their feelings of self-impatience and continue to make progress towards their goal without needing the contribution of self-compassion. However, if their self-impatience is accompanied by negative self-talk in the form of criticism, self-compassion may be uniquely suited to alleviate this aspect of their suffering. In practice, when people show themselves love, recognize their circumstances as a shared experience, and practice mindfulness, they can shift into a perspective that makes the practice of self-patience more accessible. Of course, if Merrill solely practiced self-compassion, the impulsive tendencies of self-impatience (e.g., taking shortcuts, recklessness, or goal disengagement) may persist. In short, we embrace the close ties between self-compassion and self-patience and encourage empirical efforts to map their areas of overlap and distinction.

5 | Unanswered Questions and Future Directions

Speaking of next empirical steps, we intend the process model of self-patience to be a highly generative approach both theoretically and empirically. From a theoretical perspective, this approach promises to illuminate one common and consequential form of patience, a construct that is only recently the subject of deep theoretical engagement. Articulating the ways in which self-patience may differ from other forms of patience also provides a lens through which additional distinct forms of patience may be revealed.

Additionally, the process model of self-patience has implications for theorizing about self-compassion by generating new and potentially fruitful questions. For example, is self-patience best understood as an element or facet of self-compassion, or does self-compassion enable the (separate and distinct) practice of self-patience? If the latter is true, is self-patience possible without self-compassion? And depending on the answers to those questions, do self-compassion and self-patience have unique benefits, or at least unique pathways to the same benefits? Finally, is self-impatience fundamentally inconsistent with self-compassion, or is self-impatience discernable from self-unkindness? Mapping the conceptual links between these and other related constructs can contribute to the development of targeted interventions to promote well-being.

Empirically, every claim in this paper that is unique to self-impatience or self-patience is ripe for testing. We propose specific person-level predictors and characteristics of the expression and action tendency of self-impatience, as well as specific person-level predictors of and regulation strategies for self-patience, none of which have been subjected to empirical tests. Broader questions are also of interest. For example, how often do people experience self-impatience, and how often do they respond with self-patience? When is self-impatience motivating and beneficial and when is self-patience preferable—and might self-patience itself be detrimental when a goal demands speedier pursuit (e.g., goals that are important to one's relationships or health)? Are some emotion regulation strategies more effective for countering self-impatience than others? Do the answers to any of these questions differ across the lifespan or across cultural contexts? As one hint, self-patience may be particularly potent in Western societies, where working towards goals to better oneself is highly valued (Nelson and Shavitt 2002). The empirical space is wide open for researchers to tackle any of these fundamental questions.

Beyond tests of key theoretical tenets, our approach provokes other interesting possibilities. For example, can self-patience be taught or learned? Developmental psychology provides key insights into the process by which parents and peers contribute to children's developing emotion regulation skills (e.g., Morris et al. 2007), and research on self-regulation points to practices that strengthen people's ability to regulate various unwanted experiences and behaviors (Berkman 2016). Drawing from those advances, researchers can investigate whether similar pathways apply to self-patience.

Second, how do social contexts play a role in the process of self-patience? For example, interpersonal emotion regulation entails one person's efforts to regulate another person's emotional state (e.g., Barthel et al. 2018), and co-regulation entails mutual influence of emotions or regulatory efforts (Butler and Randall 2013); presumably both processes can also arise in the context of patience generally and self-patience specifically. For example, if Merrill's close friend notices that they are struggling with self-impatience, the friend could reassure Merrill that they are making good progress (interpersonal emotion regulation), or the friend could talk with Merrill about their own slow goal pursuits and thus provide mutual reassurance (co-regulation). Studies of self-impatience that arises in social contexts can map out the effects of these and other social processes.

Third, is self-patience more beneficial for some people than others, or at some times more than others? Like any negative emotion, impatience may be unpleasant, but it also motivates potentially beneficial action. It may be that some people are better able to channel their feelings of self-impatience toward

productive ends, thus circumventing the need for self-patience, whereas others may be persistently derailed by those feelings. Similarly, some circumstances might call for the motivating push of self-impatience (e.g., when a person has a lot of room for increased effort or commitment), whereas other circumstances might particularly benefit from self-patience (e.g., when persistence or perseverance is needed rather than a change in strategy).

Fourth, do people experience more self-impatience or more readily practice self-patience in some domains compared to others? For example, might Merrill find their language learning endeavor to be deeply impatience-inducing but not their efforts to cook new cuisines, complete work tasks, or parent well? Our approach argues against domain-specific processes per se, instead predicting that people will vary in their self-impatience and self-patience depending on characteristics of a given situation. To the extent that the situation evokes a perception that a delay is objectionable, people will feel impatient; to the extent that the situation fuels their ability or motivation to regulate, people will be patient. Of course, some domains might characteristically promote those processes, which could lead to a pattern that appears to be domain specific. Future studies can test these hypotheses by varying relevant characteristics of situations within and across domains.

Finally, what is the relationship between self-patience and other forms of patience? Given the overlap in person-level factors that promote self-patience and patience more broadly, we suspect that people who find it relatively easy to be patient with other people or frustrating circumstances likely also exhibit more self-patience. That said, we embarked on this theoretical endeavor due to the presence of unique considerations when it comes to being patient with oneself, so it may be that some people struggle with self-patience despite being patient in many other circumstances, or vice versa.

6 | Conclusion

By conceptualizing self-patience as a form of emotion regulation, our approach points to potential benefits of self-patience for well-being and goal achievement. The value of practicing self-patience is in its potential to reduce feelings of self-impatience, which might otherwise lead to self-criticism, inefficient or impulsive goal-achievement strategies, or premature goal disengagement. In short, our approach can help the Merrills of the world to reach their goals in happier, healthier, and more effective ways.

Author Contributions

Sophia Susoeff and Kate Sweeny both contributed extensively to theoretical development and manuscript preparation.

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Ethics Statement

The authors have nothing to report.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The authors have nothing to report.

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