

Motivation: Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic

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Motivation inspires, yet what is motivation? For artists, motivation has been a face, a mood, a view, a random tune, or money. For athletes, motivation has been the hit, the touchdown, the shot, the race, the thrill, the win, the accomplishment, or money. For others, motivation is internal and based within the dreams and goals of their life.

Historically, motivation has been thought of in the two frames of intrinsic, or internal, and extrinsic, or environmental. The two being the yeng and yang of motivation, intrinsic motivation has traditionally been thought of as that, which causes men to act for self-accomplishment and fulfillment. It is the “desire to be competent and to do something for its own sake” (McGraw-Hill, 2004). However, Deci et al has been researching further and has established that motivation is based on the idea of self-determination.

On the other side of the coin are those actions of motivation not based on any internal desire. External motivators are items such as fame, money, job requirements, and so on. The person being acted upon does not control these motivators. These motivators are the controlling element of a person’s actions.

According to AllPsych (1999-2003), motivation is “the process that energizes and/or maintains a behavior.” It is an act of intention. The intent to act is intrinsic. One must choose to act or act upon. In doing so, the individual is self-determining the outcome of the situation. “Intentions are said to derive from one’s desire to achieve positively valiant outcomes or avoid negatively valiant ones” (Higgins & Kruglanski, 2000). Each person hopes to achieve the best of every situation. However, other elements come in to play affecting the outcome of the

action. A popular saying, which is appropriate, is that the road to hell is paved with good decisions. Man's intent is noble however corrupt the outcome. An example of this action is the nuclear bombing of Japan. The United States chose to act in this manner in an effort to save lives – American lives, yet in the process horrifically destroyed Japanese lives. The history of man is overflowing with numerous examples similar in nature.

Motivation is grounded in the locus of control. A person's view of autonomy and control are fundamental to behavior. A person who does not feel as though he is in control is less likely to act or act willingly. Autonomy and control are best seen in relationships (e.g., a child and parent, or a student and teacher). Each has autonomy to an extent; however each is controlled or guided by an external force. The parent can lay down rules, which may motivate the child to act accordingly. However, the child has a somewhat limited autonomy in that he may choose not to abide the rules knowing of the consequences of such an act. The last decade or so has seen a societal movement to empower people in their lives. A person who believes that she has a choice in a situation believes she is empowered. An empowered person is more apt to act, thus the motivation is bound in intent, which is intrinsic. In a classroom, students would interact and act as if they were expected to make choices dealing with instruction with the teacher playing a facilitative role. The teacher as a facilitator to learning is not a new concept, yet is gaining in popularity.

How an individual responds to motivation is dependent upon how he or she interprets the environment surrounding the motivation. Are the triggers

controlling or are they perceived as autonomous supportive? Controlling factors populate the surrounding environment. Those factors are seen as rewards, feedback, choices, threats, deadlines, and surveillance. Not many of these factors have positive affects upon motivation. A good deal undermines intrinsic motivation.

When motivation has a controlling tone, individuals do not respond as well. Often a controlling tone will have a negative emotional impact upon the person. If one is a behavioral theorist, negative emotional impact of an event does not incline a person to repeat an action or participate in a given situation. Additionally, a person may not respond as well to the controlling factor of motivation in the long term. If the controlling factor is not tied to an act of self-determination, there is little chance that the behavior will be sustained. A person joins Jenny Craig to lose weight for an event and not because of the benefits, (i.e., better health and better self-esteem); the weight that is lost will come back because the change has a temporary reward. The Self-determining factors to be considered are a person's choice, (e.g., enjoyment, and self-esteem).

Higgins (2000) has shown in research that student's in the classroom do respond better to facilitative teachers that allow for input of self-determination by the students. When dealing with a learning environment it is also important to note that the use of language plays a part in motivation (e.g., you did well as opposed to you did well as you were expected). The use of language is subtle, but does affect the outcome of the motivation.

According to Deci, motivation is not as simple as internal or external. Motivation is rooted in the idea of control versus self-determining behavior. Higgins gave an example of a person's clean house. The people on either side of a coin both a clean house. On one side the house is clean because the individual wants a clean house, not because she enjoys cleaning. The motivation is the end result, not the process. On the other side of the coin, the individual wants a clean house because of its appearance to friends or colleagues. Here too, the example is an extrinsic one based on the locus of control.

There are instances, which are positively constructed for controlled motivation, however. One example is that of teaching young students to look for cues to internalize for later action. A student learning the alphabet is not necessarily motivated by self-determination. He is learning the alphabet because he has been told this is what he will do. Yet, the classroom teacher anticipates that this controlled motivation will lead to a practicing reader in the future.

Motivation is no longer the simple division of internal or external. It is the intent of action rooted in self-determination versus control. I get out of bed in the morning. That is my intent, which is self-determined. I am not inspired to do so. However, some mornings the motivation is controlled by the one year old who is ready for a clean diaper and a bottle.

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