

Cultivating Motivation

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Recent events have resulted in dramatic changes in our schedules and surroundings as well as increased stress and reductions in positive reinforcement. It would be helpful, during this period, to examine motivation in more depth, so that we can learn how to *actively* cultivate this driving force in our lives.

First off....

*Motivation is not a light switch (i.e. on or off), but more like a dimmer switch (i.e. gradations).



VS



This means that it would be helpful to explore factors that potentially raise or lower motivation.

The Transtheoretical Model (also called the Stages of Change Model), developed by Prochaska and DiClemente in the late 1970s, emerged out of comparisons between smokers who were able to successfully quit on their own with those who required further treatment.

What did the results of their research reveal.....?

Three factors related to motivation Prochaska and DiClemente, (1978)

- 1) Readiness for change (Is it time?) – { **Feelings** }
- 2) Ability to make change (Can I do it?) – { **Thoughts** }
- 3) Importance of change (Do I care?) – { **Values = Thoughts + Feelings** }

We can now take these three factors and use them to help shape our discussion of 8 different approaches for enhancing motivation.

EIGHT FACTORS TO CULTIVATE MORE

MOTIVATION

Feelings

How we feel, determines whether or not we are ready to make some change or perform some action. These feelings are related to the balance between pros and cons, which are in turn related to underlying positive and negative consequences. Furthermore, reinforcement and punishment (both positive(+) and negative(-)) can be uniquely related to either the process or outcome of a task or behavioral change.

- 1) Have you identified and listed the pros and the cons? (Doing this can help to uncover and address hidden pros and cons and eventually shift the balance in favor of change or task completion).

Pros	Cons
1. <i>Get a good grade</i>	1. <i>Class Work is frustrating</i>
2. <i>Improve my writing</i>	2. <i>Get a Bad Grade</i>
3. <i>Reduce worry about paper</i>	3. <i>Class work is boring</i>
4. <i>Learn the Material</i>	

- 2) Are you motivated more by positive or negative reinforcement? (Motivation fueled primarily by negative reinforcement (i.e. striving to avoid negative consequences) is like driving a car with the parking brake engaged. You may get there, but at what cost and how long can this method of motivating oneself last, before something gives?)
- 3) Is there a balance between your focus on extrinsic or the intrinsic factors of a task or change? (Are you so focused on the destination that you miss the satisfaction associated with the journey? Lack of appreciation of the journey can lead to added frustration and/or lost moments of enjoyment leading to a relatively routine and hollow movement towards future goals.)



Thoughts

How we think determines whether or not we think we are capable of making some change or performing some action. These thoughts are a consequence of how we end up categorizing the change or task at hand as well as how we end up attributing both our successes and failures. Three major ways of attributing success or failure are through the (internal- external locus of control), (stable - unstable, trait vs. state) and (controllable - uncontrollable) domains.

Finally, thoughts that facilitate an openness to *honest and specific feedback* will also help to raise motivation in both the short and long run.

- 4) Are you framing the task or change as a “should”, a “want” or a “have” to do?
Is it an opportunity or a threat, a problem or puzzle, a burden or a challenge?
- 5) To what factors are you attributing your successes or failures?
Are they Internal or External factors? (personal effort vs. difficulty of assignment)
Are they related to stable or unstable traits? (intelligence vs. effort)
Are they related to controllable or uncontrollable factors? (preparation vs. last minute changes)
- 6) Are you open to honest and specific feedback?
An openness to feedback can help us transition from comparisons of expected vs. actual outcomes (i.e. focus on self-esteem) to focusing more on improving competence, which will ultimately enhance motivation.
{“We don’t always have to feel confident, while improving our competence.”}

Values

What and how deeply we value something, determines whether or not we care enough to perform that action or make that change. Before we think about how much we care about making some change we also have to take time to care about ourselves and develop a more compassion-focused approach. Engaging in self-compassion can reduce worry, anxiety and depression, while at the same time effectively boosting motivation. Likewise, we can spend time identifying and cultivating connections between our values and things that we “should”, “want” and even “need” to do.

- 7) Are you practicing Self-Compassion??



- 8) Are there any Values associated with the task or behavior change?
(Identifying values as well as connections between values and actions helps us transition from our self-esteem focus by providing us with a direction that will remain constant, despite set-backs).

