We all have different reasons for getting up every morning and doing what we do every day.

So why is it that, on some days, it can feel harder than others to get up when your alarm goes off, do your workout, crush a work or school assignment, or make dinner for your family?

Motivation (or a lack thereof) is usually behind why we do the things that we do.

There are different types of motivation, and as it turns out, understanding why you are motivated to do the things that you do can help you keep yourself motivated -- and can help you motivate others.

**Download our complete productivity guide here for more tips on improving your productivity at work.**

In this post, we'll dive into the two types of motivation -- intrinsic and extrinsic -- to learn the differences between the types, the benefits of each, and how to use both types to inspire productivity.

**Definitions of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation**

**Intrinsic motivation involves doing something because it's personally rewarding to you.** Extrinsic motivation involves doing something because you want to earn a reward or avoid punishment.

**What Is Intrinsic Motivation?**

When you're intrinsically motivated, your behavior is motivated by your internal desire to do something for its own sake -- for example, your personal enjoyment of an activity, or your desire to learn a skill because you're eager to learn.

Examples of intrinsic motivation could include:

- Reading a book because you enjoy the storytelling
- Exercising because you want to relieve stress
- Cleaning your home because it helps you feel organized

**What Is Extrinsic Motivation?**

When you're extrinsically motivated, your behavior is motivated by an external factor pushing you to do something in hopes of earning a reward -- or avoiding a less-than-positive outcome.

Examples of extrinsic motivation could include:

- Reading a book to prepare for a test
- Exercising to lose weight
- Cleaning your home to prepare for visitors coming over
Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: What's the Difference?

At first glance, it might seem like it's better to be intrinsically motivated than extrinsically motivated. After all, doesn't it sound like it would be ideal if you didn't need anyone -- or anything -- motivating you to accomplish tasks?

But, alas, we don't live in such a motivation-Utopia, and being extrinsically motivated doesn't mean anything bad -- extrinsic motivation is just the nature of being a human being sometimes.

If you have a job, and you have to complete a project, you're probably extrinsically motivated -- by your manager's praise or a potential raise or commission -- even if you enjoy the project while you're doing it. If you're in school, you're extrinsically motivated to learn a foreign language because you're being graded on it -- even if you enjoy practicing and studying it.

So, intrinsic motivation is good, and extrinsic motivation is good. The key is to figure out why you -- and your team -- are motivated to do things, and encouraging both types of motivation.

When Intrinsic Motivation Is Best

Research has shown that praise can help increase intrinsic motivation. Positive feedback that is "sincere," "promotes autonomy," and "conveys attainable standards" was found to promote intrinsic motivation in children.

But on the other side of that coin, external rewards can decrease intrinsic motivation if they're given too willy-nilly. When children received too much praise for completing minimal work or single tasks, their intrinsic motivation decreased.

The odds are, if you're reading this blog post, you're not a child -- although children are welcome subscribers here on the HubSpot Marketing Blog. But the principles of this study are still sound for adults.

If you're a people manager, be intentional with your praise and positive feedback. Make sure that it's specific, empowering, and helps your direct reports understand your expectations and standards. But make sure you aren't giving too much praise for work that's less meaningful for your team, or they might lose intrinsic motivation.

If you're an individual contributor, tell your manager when their feedback is motivating -- give them positive feedback, too. By providing positive feedback to your manager when they give you praise that keeps you motivated, you, in turn, will extrinsically motivate them to keep managing you successfully. (Meta, huh?)

When Extrinsic Motivation Is Best

Extrinsic rewards don't just involve bribery (although bribery can work). In some cases, people may never be internally motivated to complete a task, and extrinsic motivation can be used to get the job done.
In fact, extrinsic rewards can promote interest in a task or skill a person didn't previously have any interest in. Rewards like praise, commissions, bonuses, or prizes and awards can also motivate people to learn new skills or provide tangible feedback beyond just verbal praise or admonishment.

But tread carefully with extrinsic rewards: Studies have shown that offering too many rewards for behaviors and activities that people are already intrinsically motivated to do can actually decrease that person's intrinsic motivation -- by way of the overjustification effect.

In these cases, offering rewards for activities the person already finds rewarding can make a personally enjoyable activity seem like work -- which could kill their motivation to keep doing it.

If you're a people manager, use extrinsic rewards sparingly to motivate your team to take on new responsibilities or achieve lofty goals. Bonuses, commissions, recognition prizes, and promotions can be an effective way to motivate or reward your team for learning new skills, taking on new challenges, or hitting a quarterly goal. But make sure you're giving your team members the time and resources to explore skills and projects they're already excited about independently -- without making them a part of their regular responsibilities, which could demotivate them.

If you're an individual contributor, work for the rewards you want, but don't over-exhaust yourself in the pursuit of extrinsic prizes. Make sure you're taking time, in your job or in your personal life, to explore activities that you enjoy just for the sake of doing them, to keep yourself balanced.

What is the Meaning of Self-Determination Theory?

Self-Determination Theory, or SDT, is a theory that links personality, human motivation, and optimal functioning. It posits that there are two main types of motivation— intrinsic and extrinsic—and that both are powerful forces in shaping who we are and how we behave (Deci & Ryan, 2008). It is a theory that grew out of researchers Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan’s work on motivation in the 1970s and 1980s. Although it has grown and expanded since then, the basic tenets of the theory come from Deci and Ryan’s seminal 1985 book on the topic.

Deci and Ryan’s Theory of Motivation (1985)

According to Deci and Ryan, extrinsic motivation is a drive to behave in certain ways that comes from external sources and results in external rewards (1985). Such sources include grading systems, employee evaluations, awards and accolades, and the respect and admiration of others.

On the other hand, intrinsic motivation comes from within. There are internal drives that motivate us to behave in certain ways, including our core values, our interests, and our personal sense of morality.

Although it might seem like intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are diametrically opposed—with intrinsic driving behavior in keeping with our “ideal self” and extrinsic
leading us to conform with the standards of others—there is another important distinction in the types of motivation. SDT differentiates between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2008).

**Autonomous motivation** includes motivation that comes from internal sources, but it also includes motivation from extrinsic sources if the individual has identified with an activity’s value and feel it aligns with their sense of self. **Controlled motivation** is comprised of **external regulation**—a type of motivation in which the individual’s behavior is directed by external rewards and punishment—and **introjected regulation**, or motivation that comes from only partially internalized activities and values and motives such as avoiding shame, seeking approval, and protecting the ego. When an individual is driven by autonomous motivation, he or she feels self-directed and autonomous; when the individual is driven by controlled motivation, he or she feels pressure to behave in a certain way and experience little to no autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2008).

**The Self-Determination Model, Scale, and Continuum**

However, we are rarely driven by only one type of motivation or the other; we are complex beings with many different goals, desires, and ideas about what we want and need. Instead of thinking about motivation as being at one polar end or the other, it is useful to think of it as a continuum from non-self-determined to self-determined.

At the left end of the spectrum, we have amotivation, in which an individual is completely non-autonomous, has no drive to speak of, and is likely struggling to have any of their needs met. In the middle, we have several levels of extrinsic motivation.
One step to the right of amotivation is **external regulation**, in which motivation is exclusively external and regulated by compliance, conformity, and external rewards and punishments.

The next level of extrinsic motivation is termed **introjected regulation**, in which the motivation is somewhat external and is driven by self-control, efforts to protect the ego, and internal rewards and punishments.

In **identified regulation**, the motivation is somewhat internal and based on conscious values and that which is personally important to the individual.

The final step of extrinsic motivation is **integrated regulation**, in which the individual is beginning to be motivated by intrinsic sources and the desire to be **self-aware** and act in congruence with his or her core values and sense of self.

The right end of the continuum shows an individual entirely motivated by intrinsic sources. In **intrinsic regulation**, the individual is self-motivated and self-determined, and driven by interest, enjoyment, and the satisfaction inherent in the behavior or activity he or she is engaging in.

Although self-determination is generally the goal for individuals, we can’t help but be motivated by external sources sometimes—and that’s not necessarily a bad thing. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are highly influential determinants of our behavior, and both drive us to meet the three basic needs identified by the SDT model:

1. **Autonomy**: people have a need to feel that they are the masters of their own destiny and that they have at least some control over their lives; most importantly, people have a need to feel that they are in control of their own behavior.
2. **Competence**: another need concerns our achievements, knowledge, and skills; people have a need to build their competence and develop mastery over tasks that are important to them.
3. **Relatedness (also called Connection):** people need to have a sense of belonging and connectedness with others; each of us needs other people to some degree (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

According to the developers of SDT, Deci and Richard M. Ryan, individual differences in personality result from the varying degrees to which each need has been satisfied—or thwarted (2008). The two main aspects on which individuals differ include causality orientations and aspirations or **life goals**.

Causality orientations refer to how people adapt and orient themselves to their environment and their degree of self-determination in general, across many different contexts. The three causality orientations are:

1. **Autonomous:** all three basic needs are satisfied.
2. **Controlled:** competence and relatedness are somewhat satisfied but autonomy is not.
3. **Impersonal:** none of the three needs are satisfied.

Aspirations or life goals are what people use to guide their own behavior. They generally fall into one of the two categories of motivation mentioned earlier: intrinsic or extrinsic. Deci and Ryan provide affiliation, generativity, and personal development as examples of intrinsic life goals, while they list wealth, fame, and attractiveness as examples of extrinsic life goals (2008). Aspirations and life goals drive us, but they are considered learned desires instead of basic needs like autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

SDT presents two sub-theories for a more nuanced understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These sub-theories are **Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET)** and **Organismic Integration Theory (OIT)** which help explain intrinsic motivation with regards to its social factors and the various degrees of contextual factors that influence extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Let’s take a deeper look:

**Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET)**

According to CET intrinsic motivation can be **facilitating** or **undermining**, depending on the social and environmental factors in play. Referring to the Needs Theory, Deci & Ryan (1985, 2000) argue that interpersonal events, rewards, **communication** and feedback that gear towards feelings of competence when performing an activity will enhance intrinsic motivation for that particular activity.

However, this level of intrinsic motivation is not attained if the individual doesn’t feel that the performance itself is self-determined or that they had the autonomous choice to perform this activity.

So, for a high level of intrinsic motivation two psychological needs have to be fulfilled:

- The first is competence so that the activity results in feelings of self-development and **efficacy**.
The second is the need for autonomy that performance of the chosen activity was self-initiated or self-determined.

Thus for CET theory to hold true, motivation needs to be intrinsic and have an appeal to the individual. It also implies that intrinsic motivation will be enhanced or undermined depending on whether the needs for autonomy and competence are supported or thwarted respectively.

It is believed that the use of the needs for autonomy and competence are linked to our motivations. Deci conducted a study on the effects of extrinsic rewards on people’s intrinsic motivation.

Results showed that when people received extrinsic rewards (e.g., money) for doing something, eventually they were less interested and less likely to do it later, comparing to the people who did the same activity without receiving the reward.

The results were interpreted as the participants’ behavior, which was initially intrinsically motivated, became controlled by the rewards which lead to an undermined sense of autonomy. This concept is beautifully explained in this video by RSA animate.

Organismic Integration Theory (OIT)

The second sub-theory is Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) that argues that extrinsic motivation depends on the extent to which autonomy is present.

In other words, extrinsic motivation varies according to the internalization and integration of the value of the activity. Internalization is how well the value of an activity is felt while integration explains the process of individual transformation from external regulation to their own self-regulated version (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

For instance, school assignments are an externally regulated activity. Internalization in this situation can be understood as the child seeing the value and importance of the assignment while integration in this situation would be the degree to which he perceives performing the assignment as his own choice.

The OIT thus offers us a greater perspective on the different levels of extrinsic motivation that exist and the processes of internalization and integration, which could eventually result in the autonomous choice of performing the activity for its intrinsic perceived joy and value.

Examples of SDT in Psychology

To understand self-determination theory, it can be useful to see some examples of people who are high in self-determination, or thinking and acting in an autonomous and intrinsically motivated fashion.

The best description of a self-determined individual is someone who:

1. Believes she is in control of her own life.
2. Takes responsibility for her own behavior (taking credit and blame when either is warranted).
3. Is self-motivated instead of driven by others’ standards or external sources.
4. Determines her actions based on her own internal values and goals.

For example, imagine a high school student who fails an important test. If she is high in self-determination—feels responsible for her actions, believes she is in control of her behavior, etc.—she might tell her parents that she should have spent more time studying and that she plans to carve out some extra time to study. Her plan of action would be the same whether her parents were upset and disappointed or apathetic because she is motivated by an internal desire to be competent and knowledgeable.

If this same student is low in self-determination—feels that she is not in control of her life and that she is a victim of circumstance—she might blame the teacher for giving a tough test that he didn’t prepare his students for. She may blame her parents for not helping her study or her friends for distracting her. She might even blame nobody in particular because she doesn’t really care about her grade. If she does care about her grade, it is not due to an internal desire to do well, but a desire to win her parents’ approval, bolster her ego by getting the best grade in the class or impress her teacher with her knowledge.

The man who decides to pick up a new hobby because he thinks he’ll enjoy it is exhibiting self-determination, while the man who picks up a new hobby because it seems prestigious or impressive is not.

Similarly, the woman who blames all of her ex-lovers for ruining their relationships is not displaying self-determination; the woman who takes responsibility for her part in contributing to unhealthy or unhappy past relationships is showing self-determination.

You have probably spotted the theme here: those who take responsibility for their actions and do things because they align with their own personal values and goals are self-determined, and those who blame others, see themselves as constant victims and do things solely for external approval or recognition are not.
SDT is centered on the belief that human nature shows persistent positive features, that it repeatedly shows effort, agency and commitment in their lives that the theory calls "inherent growth tendencies". People also have innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation and personality integration.

**Self-determination theory (SDT)** is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that concerns people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs. It is concerned with the motivation behind choices people make without external influence and interference. SDT focuses on the degree to which an individual's behavior is self-motivated and self-determined.[1][2][3]

In the 1970s, research on SDT evolved from studies comparing the intrinsic and extrinsic motives, and from growing understanding of the dominant role intrinsic motivation played in an individual's behavior[4] but it was not until the mid-1980s that SDT was formally introduced and accepted as a sound empirical theory. Research applying SDT to different areas in social psychology has increased considerably since the 2000s.

Key studies that led to emergence of SDT included research on intrinsic motivation.[5] Intrinsic motivation refers to initiating an activity for its own sake because it is interesting and satisfying in itself, as opposed to doing an activity to obtain an external goal (extrinsic motivation). Different types of motivations have been described based on the degree they have been internalized. Internalization refers to the active attempt to transform an extrinsic motive into personally endorsed values and thus assimilate behavioural regulations that were originally external.[6]

*Edward L. Deci and Richard Ryan* later expanded on the early work differentiating between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and proposed three main intrinsic needs involved in self-determination.[7][8] According to Deci and Ryan, the three psychological needs motivate the self to initiate behavior and specify nutriments that are essential for psychological health and well-being of an individual. These needs are said to be universal, innate and psychological and include the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.[1]

SDT identifies three innate needs that, if satisfied, allow optimal function and growth:

1. **Competence**[9][10]
2. **Relatedness**[11]
3. **Autonomy**[2][3][12]

These needs are seen as universal necessities that are innate, not learned (instinctive), and seen in humanity across time, gender and culture.[14]

Deci and Ryan claim that there are three essential elements of the theory:[15]

1. Humans are inherently proactive with their potential and mastering their inner forces (such as drives and emotions)
2. Humans have an inherent tendency toward growth development and integrated functioning
3. Optimal development and actions are inherent in humans but they don’t happen automatically
To actualise their inherent potential they need nurturing from the social environment.

If this happens there are positive consequences (e.g. well being and growth) but if not, there are negative consequences. So SDT emphasises humans' natural growth toward positive motivation; however, this is thwarted if their basic needs are not fulfilled.

**Needs**

SDT supports three basic psychological needs that must be satisfied to foster well-being and health. These needs can be universally applied. However, some may be more salient than others at certain times and are expressed differently based on time, culture, or experience.

**Competence**

Seek to control the outcome and experience mastery.

**Relatedness**

Will to interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others.

**Autonomy**

Desire to be causal agents of one's own life and act in harmony with one's integrated self; however, Deci and Vansteenkiste note this does not mean to be independent of others.

**Motivations**

SDT claims to give a different approach to motivation, considering what motivates a person at any given time as opposed to seeing motivation as a unitary concept. SDT makes distinctions between different types of motivation and the consequences of them.

**Intrinsic motivation**

Intrinsic motivation is the natural, inherent drive to seek out challenges and new possibilities that SDT associates with cognitive and social development.

*Cognitive evaluation theory* (CET) is a sub-theory of SDT that specifies factors explaining intrinsic motivation and variability with it and looks at how social and environmental factors help or hinder intrinsic motivations. CET focuses on the needs of competence and autonomy. CET is offered as an explanation of the phenomenon known as motivational "crowding out."

Claiming social context events like feedback on work or rewards lead to feelings of competence and so enhance intrinsic motivations. Deci found positive feedback enhanced intrinsic motivations and negative feedback diminished it. Vallerand and Reid went further and found that these effects were being mediated by perceived control.

Autonomy, however, must accompany competence for people to see their behaviours as self determined by intrinsic motivation. For this to happen there must be immediate contextual support for both needs or inner resources based on prior development support for both needs.
CET and intrinsic motivation is also linked to relatedness through the hypothesis that intrinsic motivation flourishes if linked with a sense of security and relatedness. Grolnick and Ryan found lower intrinsic motivation in children who believed their teachers to be uncaring or cold and so not fulfilling their relatedness needs.

**Extrinsic motivation**

Extrinsic motivation comes from external sources. Deci and Ryan developed organismic integration theory (OIT), as a sub-theory of SDT, to explain the different ways extrinsically motivated behaviour is regulated.

OIT details the different forms of extrinsic motivation and the contexts in which they come about. It is the context of such motivation that concerns the SDT theory as these contexts affect whether the motivations are internalised and so integrated into the sense of self.

OIT describes four different types of extrinsic motivations that often vary in terms of their relative autonomy:

1. **Externally regulated behaviour**: Is the least autonomous, it is performed because of external demand or possible reward. Such actions can be seen to have an externally perceived locus of causality.

2. **Introjected regulation of behaviour**: describes taking on regulations to behaviour but not fully accepting said regulations as your own. Deci and Ryan claim such behaviour normally represents regulation by contingent self-esteem, citing ego involvement as a classic form of introjections. This is the kind of behaviour where people feel motivated to demonstrate ability to maintain self-worth. While this is internally driven, introjected behavior has an external perceived locus of causality or not coming from one's self. Since the causality of the behavior is perceived as external, the behavior is considered non-self-determined.

3. **Regulation through identification**: a more autonomously driven form of extrinsic motivation. It involves consciously valuing a goal or regulation so that said action is accepted as personally important.

4. **Integrated Regulation**: Is the most autonomous kind of extrinsic motivation. Occurring when regulations are fully assimilated with self so they are included in a person's self evaluations and beliefs on personal needs. Because of this, integrated motivations share qualities with intrinsic motivation but are still classified as extrinsic because the goals that are trying to be achieved are for reasons extrinsic to the self, rather than the inherent enjoyment or interest in the task.

Extrinsically motivated behaviours can be integrated into self. OIT proposes internalization is more likely to occur when there is a sense of relatedness.

Ryan, Stiller and Lynch found that children internalize school's extrinsic regulations when they feel secure and cared for by parents and teachers.

Internalisation of extrinsic motivation is also linked to competence. OIT suggests that feelings of competence in activities should facilitate internalisation of said actions.

Autonomy is particularly important when trying to integrate its regulations into a person's sense of self. If an external context allows a person to integrate regulation—they must feel competent, related and autonomous. They must also understand the regulation in terms of
their other goals to facilitate a sense of autonomy. This was supported by Deci, Eghrari, Patrick and Leone who found in laboratory settings if a person was given a meaningful reason for uninteresting behaviour along with support for their sense of autonomy and relatedness they internalized and integrated their behaviour.

**Basic needs and intrinsic motivation**

White and deCharms proposed that the need for competence and autonomy is the basis of intrinsic motivation and behaviour. This is a link between people's basic needs and their motivations.

**Autonomy**

Deci found that offering people extrinsic rewards for behaviour that is intrinsically motivated undermined the intrinsic motivation as they grow less interested in it. Initially intrinsically motivated behaviour becomes controlled by external rewards, which undermines their autonomy.

Further research by Amabile, DeJong and Lepper found other external factors like deadlines, which restrict and control, also decrease intrinsic motivation.

Situations that give autonomy as opposed to taking it away also have a similar link to motivation. Studies looking at choice have found that increasing a participant's options and choices increases their intrinsic motivation.

**Competence**

Deci found that giving people unexpected positive feedback on a task increases people's intrinsic motivation to do it, meaning that this was because the positive feedback was fulfilling people's need for competence. In fact, giving positive feedback on a task served only to increase people's intrinsic motivation and decreased extrinsic motivation for the task.

Vallerand and Reid found negative feedback has the opposite effect (i.e., decreasing intrinsic motivation by taking away from people's need for competence).

**Relatedness**

During a study on the relationship between infants' attachment styles, their exhibition of mastery-oriented behaviour, and their affect during play, Frodi, Bridges and Grolnick failed to find significant effects: "Perhaps somewhat surprising was the finding that the quality of attachment assessed at 12 months failed to significantly predict either mastery motivation, competence, or affect 8 months later, when other investigators have demonstrated an association between similar constructs ..." Yet they note that larger sample sizes could be able to uncover such effects: "A comparison of the secure/stable and the insecure/stable groups, however, did suggest that the secure/stable group was superior to the insecure/stable groups on all mastery-related measures. Obviously, replications of all the attachment-motivation relations are needed with different and larger samples."
Individual differences

SDT argues that needs are innate but can be developed in a social context. Some people develop stronger needs than others, creating individual differences. However, individual differences within the theory focus on concepts resulting from the degree to which needs have been satisfied or not satisfied.

Within SDT there are two general individual difference concepts, Causality Orientations and Life Goals.

Causality orientations

Causality orientations are motivational orientations that refer to either the way people orient to an environment and regulate their behaviour because of this or the extent to which they are self determined in general across many settings. SDT created three orientations: autonomous, controlled and impersonal.

1. **Autonomous Orientations**: result from satisfaction of the basic needs
2. **Strong controlled orientations**: Result from satisfaction of competence and relatedness needs but not of autonomy and is linked to regulation through internal and external contingencies, which lead to rigid functioning and diminished well being.
3. **Impersonal Orientations**: Results from failing to fulfill all three needs. This is also related to poor functioning and ill being.

According to the theory people have some amount of each of the orientations, which can be used to make predictions on a persons psychological health and behavioural outcomes.

Life goals

Life goals are long-term goals people use to guide their activities, and they fall into two categories:\(^{[31]}\)

1. **Intrinsic Aspirations**: Contain life goals like affiliation, generativity and personal development.
2. **Extrinsic Aspirations**: Have life goals like wealth, fame and attractiveness.

There have been several studies on this subject that chart intrinsic goals being associated with greater health, well being and performance.\(^{[32]}\)