

Motivation and Engagement

Motivation is the desire to act in service of a goal. It's the crucial element in setting and attaining our objectives.

Motivation is one of the driving forces behind human behaviour. It fuels competition and sparks social connection. Motivation encompasses the desire to continue striving toward meaning, purpose, and a life worth living.

The absence of motivation leads to demotivation. This can lead to mental illnesses such as depression.

Motivation is the reason behind every action. Let us look at a simple act. Let's say Mahesh picks up a glass of water. What is his motivation to pick up the water? It could be any of these:

1. Mahesh is feeling thirsty.
2. Mahesh wants to wash something.
3. Mahesh is trying to help his teacher who is thirsty.
4. Mahesh's father will scold him if he does not give him water.
5. The man will pay him two rupees if he fetches him water.

We learn that the sources of motivation can be several, but motivation always results in positive action. By positive action we mean that some action is performed.

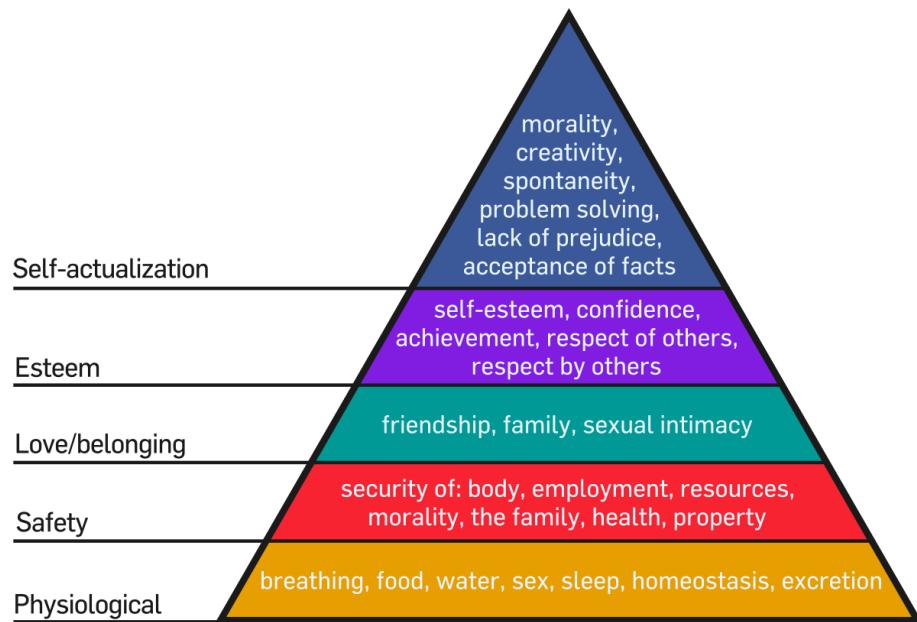
We also notice that the person will perform an action only if he experiences motivation. Something must make him feel like getting up and doing something! **People do things for their own reasons, not yours!** No matter how hard we try, a person will act only if *he* is motivated. Like they say, you can bring a horse to the water, you cannot make him drink. Therefore it is good to know how we are motivated and how persons around us are motivated.

The research scholar, humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow taught us about the five NEEDS that we humans have. We like to satisfy these needs. Any one of these needs can make us feel like taking action. And we are motivated to perform suitable action.

What are these needs?

Maslow listed the needs as a pyramid. The base with the widest panel has the basic physical needs of food clothing etc. As we go higher up this pyramid, we find the needs of security, emotional needs, self-esteem and creativity and finally self-actualisation.

Maslow himself has said that the levels only indicate the greater occurrence of that need as motivation. Sometimes there could be persons who value self-esteem more than food or family. There could be a person whose need for being creative is higher motivation than clothes or income.



What does motivation look like?

How do we know that we are motivated? Most of us have a fixed schedule. The day is decided by a timetable! We are doing what we are expected to do. From the moment we get up to the time we go to bed we are following a routine! It then becomes difficult to know if we are feeling motivated or we are acting on auto-pilot.

Look at this list of statements

- I feel energetic.
- I want to do my best.
- I am interested in the outcome or result of my action.
- I feel happy while I am doing the action.
- I feel satisfied when the action is completed.
- I try to learn or think of better ways to perform the action.
- I want to earn more.
- I am excited by the possibility of a reward or social recognition.

If you agree with any of these statements then you are motivated.

What is demotivation? What is the cause of demotivation?

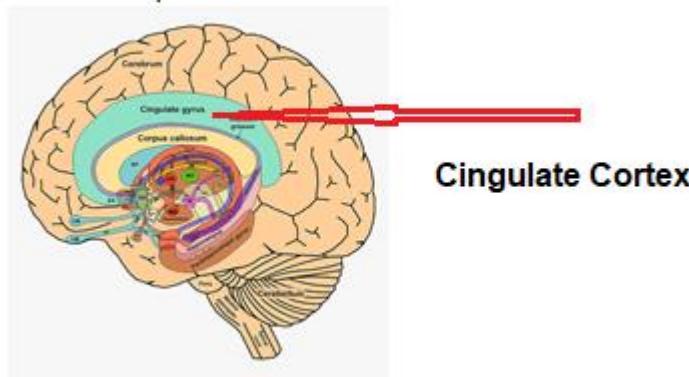
Lack of interest in performing the required action is called demotivation. Demotivation is the absence of that inner feeling of joy. A demotivated person will not be able to do his best. Such a person has increased negative feelings and feels a heaviness within.

Why do we go from Motivation to Demotivation?

The cingulate cortex has been proposed to play a crucial role in motivation by “energizing” action or task engagement ([Stuss and Alexander 2007](#)) and has been associated with allocation and adjustment of control based on task demands ([Paus 2001](#)). Lesions or gray matter volume loss here has been linked with pathological apathy

[Individual Differences in Premotor Brain Systems Underlie Behavioral Apathy | Cerebral Cortex | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)

One study states that a general disinterest towards things and towards performing even beneficial actions could be the result of a difference in the structure of certain parts of the brain. It is good to be aware that motivation is also dependent on the physical structure of the brain. This means that in some persons there are pathological reasons for depression or demotivation.



But we shall now focus our attention on non-pathological reasons for demotivation.

The reasons for demotivation depend entirely on the original source of motivation. When the source of motivation is affected the degree of motivation begins to reduce.

Most of the time we begin a task with great enthusiasm. We are motivated. We are eager to learn and we are eager to impress people (specially our bosses) with our good performance. But this motivation gradually turns into demotivation. The task does not generate as much satisfaction as before. We do not feel the excitement, we do not care to learn and we lose hope in the efficacy of our action.

We shall briefly look at a professional setting and see why persons are demotivated with the job they do.

Motivation to demotivation in professional setting – 4 stages

1. Motivated Ineffective: A new recruit is very enthusiastic. He wants to do his best. He is eager to please and learn. But because he doesn't know much about the organisation or its working, or maybe even his duties, his work is ineffective.
2. Motivated Effective: The employee has been working for some time. She has gained expertise. She is comfortable with the job. She is effective and motivated.

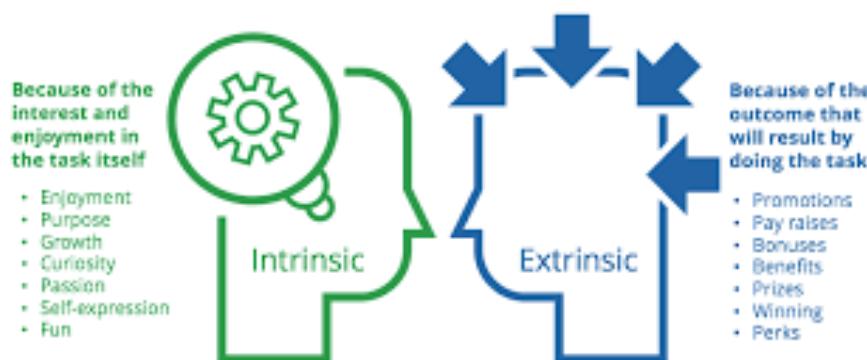
3. Demotivated Effective: The employee has set too high expectations of himself, or is unable to meet the expectations of the organisation. He is unhappy about something, it could be pay, or workload, or any other matter. He spreads negativity into the atmosphere. He is beginning to be demotivated but his work continues to be productive. At this point determined self-help or effective techniques by the management can enable the employee to stage 1 again.
4. Demotivated Ineffective: The employee has lost faith in the job or in her ability to do the job assigned. The work she does is ineffective. She does not enjoy the work, she is ineffective and demotivated.

Sources of motivation

Every person seeks happiness and fulfilment in life. Different persons find happiness in different ways. But each of these persons is motivated. Let us find out what factors motivate us towards performing action. We know of two main sources of motivation

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION and INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

INTRINSIC VS. EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION: WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO



Extrinsic Motivation:

We are motivated by external sources. We depend on others for motivation. Our happiness depends entirely on what others do or say. We are motivated by

- pay and possible reward
- social standing or power
- fear of reprimand, blame
- thinking of ethics, 'what will people say'.

Extrinsic motivation is a good as a temporary source of motivation. The problem with this is that it depends entirely on external factors. We are constantly looking for reward or praise. And in the

absence of such a positive feedback we become sad. We begin to have doubts about our self worth. We assume that we are not good enough. The joy does not come from the process of work, it comes from reward and praise. So in the absence of such reward or praise we feel loss of energy.

Intrinsic Motivation: Intrinsic motivation comes from within. This is totally under our control. We find happiness in the process. This means we are enjoying the act of doing something. The reward is in the action itself. If we receive praise that is good. But the absence of reward and praise from external sources does not injure us. Intrinsic motivation is totally under our control.

How do we achieve intrinsic motivation?

1. Time Management: one thing is for sure we all have 24 hours a day, every day! Take time to decide what needs to be done, when! Work backward from the time when action needs to take place and decide on start time. Completing work on time is a great motivator.
2. Creating Structure: Apply your mind, read books to help you create structure. Even if you have been doing the same thing for years, take a fresh look at what you wish to achieve and structure the process. The process of rethinking is energising.
3. Prioritising and goal setting: Find your WHY. Why are you doing what you are doing? Write down your goals, decide what is priority. Teachers often confuse this with setting student goals. Goal setting involves only your personal goal. What will you achieve at your personal level? A better process? More learning? Seeking help? Knowing where you want to go, is motivating.
4. Climb the ladder – one step at a time: When we look at the long To-Do list that we have prepared we feel overwhelmed. We feel that we can never complete it and feel demotivated. It is good to break down the goal to real small baby steps. And focus only on what small task needs to be completed first. Small successes add to a feeling of accomplishment. And that is motivating.
5. Judgement and dealing with it: A strong demotivating factor can be judgement – both self judging when we judge ourself harshly, and judgement from others like peers and bosses. We must be sure about what is being judged? Looks? Performance? Knowledge or skill? Popularity? Then find out what we are lacking and how we can get better at that particular area. Also decide about what you want to improve in and learn to ignore negative comments about things that do not matter. A model would have to pay attention to judgements about her make-up or figure or looks, but a librarian or teacher would pay attention to judgements about teaching skill or organising skill. Here looks do not matter much.

6. Exercise: A good 30 minutes of walking, yoga, stretching exercises clears the mind and tones the body. Contrary to expectation, this 30 minute workout instead of tiring you actually energises you and you feel energised. Negative thoughts are replaced by positive hopes and plans for the future.
7. Deep breathing: Find out more about deep breathing by joining a class, or watch videos from reputed experts. Deep breathing does wonders to your mindset and helps you centre yourself and find happiness.
8. Eat healthy: We do not have to avoid all fried food, or sweets. There is no need to go overboard with fancy diets. An awareness of what is healthy to eat and making a large part of our diet healthy makes us more productive.
9. You are not alone – if you feel you are, then network, find the others: Do you feel lonely? Or do you feel that you think different from others. Do not fret. The world has many types and you are sure to find good network of persons who think like you or can help you sort things out in your head! Find your network.

Intrinsic motivation has to do with mindset. It depends entirely on our ability to find joy in the process rather than in the result. This implies that I pay complete attention to the task on hand and enjoy the performing of the task. Mindfulness helps.

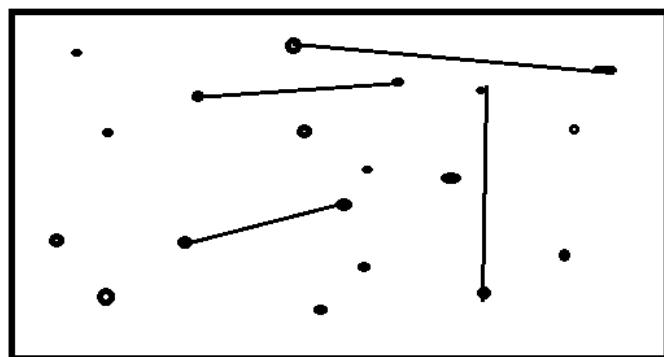
What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

Have you watched the movie Kungfu Panda? Oogway tells Po 'Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. And today is a gift and that is why it is called PRESENT!'

Try this: Join the dots

You must join all the dots on this page with a single line without crossing any line. You must use the lines already printed.



Most of us, most of the time are filled with thoughts of the past or we are engaged with dreams and fear of the future. But the future is being shaped by what we do today.

Paying total attention to the present is mindfulness.

Have you taken part in a sport? A game of badminton, or basketball? Have you been a fan of cricket or football etc? Have you seen how involved the batsman is with hitting the ball? Do you sing, or paint, or cook? Have you paid such total attention to the activity on hand that all else is forgotten. The past, the future, do not exist. Only the present does! That is a state of mindfulness.

Did you experience it for seconds when you played the join the dots game printed above? If we are able to bring such complete attention to the process, to the action, the result of the action is tremendous. It does wonders to our mind and our inner wellbeing.

Being mindful even for a few moments of the day results in such high energy that we remain motivated for the rest of the day. You will be surprised at how much work you will be able to complete just by being mindful and paying total attention to the task on hand.

Remember that you must be mindful to whatever the task on hand is – making a list, putting on your shoes, eating breakfast or sweeping the floor!

Mindfulness brings relief. And that results in being motivated.

Some books that you can read:

1. The Secret – By Rhonda Byrne
2. The Practice – Seth Godin
3. 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People – Stephen Covey
4. Man's Search For Meaning – Viktor Frankl
5. Mindset – Carol Dewk
6. Monk Who Sold His Ferrari – Robin Sharma
7. Law Of Success – Napoleon Hill
8. Ikigai – Hector Garcia

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