

16 Ways to Motivate Anyone

Moving beyond the notion of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation
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Siblings punch each other. It is a [moral](#) imperative to determine that day's victor. As welts begin to form, as bruises begin to darken, as blood drenches the carpet, at some point, [parents](#) must intervene. How do you motivate a child to act more kindly to their biological roommate?

Employees will perform exceptionally. And when they do, how will you reward them as a sign of appreciation? How can you reward them in a way that sustains their momentum?

The majority of books on [leadership](#), parenting, and psychology divide [motivation](#) into two types: extrinsic and intrinsic. This is a simple bullet point that offers a lot of mileage. We can consider the *content* of goals and the *reasons* for pursuing goals. For instance, your goals might be driven by “extrinsic” goal content (financial success, appearing attractive to others, being known or admired by many people) or “intrinsic” goal content (being fulfilled and having a very meaningful life, having close and caring relationships with others). In several studies, scientists have shown that people who prioritize intrinsic over extrinsic goal content experience greater well-being. If people feel that they are the author of their own lives, pursuing goals that derive from deeply held interests (intrinsic), they devote more effort to these pursuits and end up more successful. In contrast, people who feel they are being controlled, following the rules and obligations held by others (extrinsic), show less persistence in pursuing their goals.

All of this makes sense and is based on sound research. I am suggesting that it is time to move to the next level. It is time to appreciate the complexity of how to motivate human beings. Knowing what motivates others is essential to establishing and maintaining effective relationships. This is going to sound trivial and obvious but nearly every person is motivated by different needs, at varying degrees, and at different times. If we want to influence and [persuade](#) other people, we need to know how a person prioritizes their needs. A point expressed by Stephen Covey in his bestseller, [The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People](#):

"Dependent people need others to get what they want. Independent people can get what they want through their own efforts. Interdependent people combine their own efforts with the efforts of others to achieve their greatest success."

Mix these characters up, treat them all the same, and your influence is going to be unimpressive. The amount of pleasure and meaning that we experience in our lives can be traced to how effectively basic needs are satisfied. Reflect on these 3 questions for a moment.

- 1) What drives *YOU* to put in your best effort at work?
- 2) Would you work if you didn't have to?
- 3) Is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation enough to describe you or anyone else?

My guess is the answer to this last question is no. Deciding on whether to wake up at 6:30 A.M. for breakfast with two friendly and highly successful colleagues, my hope is that you could clarify the motives for going. A desire to form a deep connection? Curiosity about where the conversation might lead and what you could learn? An opportunity to showcase your [creativity](#) and [intelligence](#)? Don't think of it as a battle between motives, instead, think of how you prioritize them. Just as you can rank-order your motivation for waking up early to attend this social gathering, you can learn what

needs your employee is trying to satisfy (that makes them tick), and how to get your kids attention.

In the pursuit of a rich, meaningful life, there is a growing body of science suggesting that our greatest values guide our behavior. Psychologist Steven Reiss argues that there are 16 core values/desires/motives. Knowing how we prioritize them and how others do the same can explain a lot about why we do the things we do. More importantly, knowing how these 16 basic values are prioritized can help us to motivate other people—whether we are interested in rewards or punishments. Here are the 16 in no particular order:

CURIOSITY - The desire for knowledge and experience.

ACCEPTANCE - The desire for inclusion.

ORDER - The desire for organization.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - The desire for the exercise of muscles.

HONOR - The desire to be loyal to one's parents and heritage.

POWER - The desire to influence others.

INDEPENDENCE - The desire for self-reliance.

SOCIAL CONTACT - The desire for companionship.

FAMILY - The desire to raise one's own children.

STATUS - The desire for social standing.

IDEALISM - The desire for social justice.

VENGEANCE - The desire to get even.

ROMANCE - The desire for intimate connection, sensuality, and [sexuality](#).

EATING - The desire to consume food.

SAVING - The desire to collect things.

TRANQUILITY - The desire for emotional calm.

Just remember

- People act in ways that express their values
- Values predict behavior
- People are not necessarily aware of their values
- How we prioritize values can change over time

If you truly want to motivate other people, learn about what motivates them. The values that describe someone best offer insight into the best way to mobilize their energy. Forego global, simple solutions.

To dig deeper, check out:

Kasser, T., & Ryan, R. M. (1996). Further examining the American dream: Differential correlates of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 280-287. Reiss, S. (2004). Multifaceted [nature](#) of intrinsic motivation: The theory of 16 basic desires. *Review of General Psychology*, 8(3), 179+193. Reiss, S., & Havercamp, S. (1996). The sensitivity theory of motivation: Implications for psychopathology. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 34, 621-632.

Sheldon, K. M., Ryan, R., Deci, E., & Kasser, T. (2004). The independent effects of goal contents and motives on well-being: It's both what you pursue and why you pursue it. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30, 475-486.