

What is Self Determination Theory?

The main aim of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is to understand what humans need for flourishing, and what forces will interfere and promote that outcome. SDT seeks to understand the motivation behind human behavior and the factors that influence the pursuit of goals and aspirations.

SDT provides a framework of motivation, relating to differences in peoples' sense of engagement, persistence, performance, and wellness.

- Autonomous Motivation is observed when behavior is initiated and governed by the self.
 - Intrinsic Motivation = when individuals participate in an activity for enjoyment, satisfaction or interest
- Controlled (extrinsic and introjected) Motivation is observed when behavior is not initiated or governed by the self.
 - Extrinsic Motivation = when individuals participate in an activity to achieve external rewards or avoid punishment
 - Introjected Regulation = behaviors that are performed on account of internal pressures such as obligation and guilt
- Amotivated Motivation refers to the lack or absence of motivation and is observed when individuals do not perceive the contingencies between their actions and their consequences.

Components:

Autonomy: Individuals have an innate psychological need to feel in control of their own actions and choices. Autonomy refers to the sense of feeling like we are the authors of our own lives.

- Autonomy does not equal independence.
- It does not require an absence of requirements, but rather an endorsement of their legitimacy
- The opposite of feeling autonomous is feeling controlled. (i.e., when one's behavior is regulated by external or internal pressures, and one feels "forced" or "compelled" to do something, based on desired outcomes and the contingencies they tend to bring)

Belonging (Relatedness): Humans have a fundamental desire to connect with others and experience a sense of belongingness. We want to know that we are respected, supportive and cared for. Fostering meaningful relationships and social interactions is key.

- Learners are more likely to listen, internalize, and integrate the values associated with high quality patient care, if they can relate to their teachers and leaders.
- Students who feel connected to and have positive relationships with their peers and leaders are more likely to be motivated to engage in learning activities.
- Peer support provides a sense of belongingness and acceptance, contributing to residents' intrinsic motivation to excel academically.

Competence: Individuals are driven to be successful and seek mastery and proficiency in their endeavors. Competence involves feeling capable and effective in dealing with the challenges and tasks.

- Focus on effective feedback to increase efficacy instead of personal evaluation.
- Frequent positive feedback is best. No feedback can have similar effects to negative feedback.
- Overcoming challenges and growing as a person are crucial components in continuously fostering the desire to feel competent

Meaning: Humans have an intrinsic motivation to seek meaning and purpose in our lives. Meaning refers to the significance and relevance that individuals attach to their actions, goals, and experiences.

- Meaningfulness arises when individuals perceive their activities as aligned with their core values, interests, and personal goals.
- When people engage in tasks or pursue goals that resonate with their sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness—the three basic psychological needs proposed by SDT—they are more likely to experience a deep sense of meaning and satisfaction.

Citations:

- Greg Guldner, contributor, June 10, 2024.
- Adam Neufeld, contributor, June 4, 2024
- Ratelle, C. F., Guay, F., Vallerand, R. J., Larose, S., & Sénécal, C. (2007). Autonomous, controlled, and amotivated types of academic motivation: a person-oriented analysis.. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(4), 734-746. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.4.734>
- Rigby, S., Neufeld, A., (2024, May 13). *Autonomy Interventions: Keys to Success* [Workshop Presentation]. Resident Experience and Retention Summit, Savannah, GA.