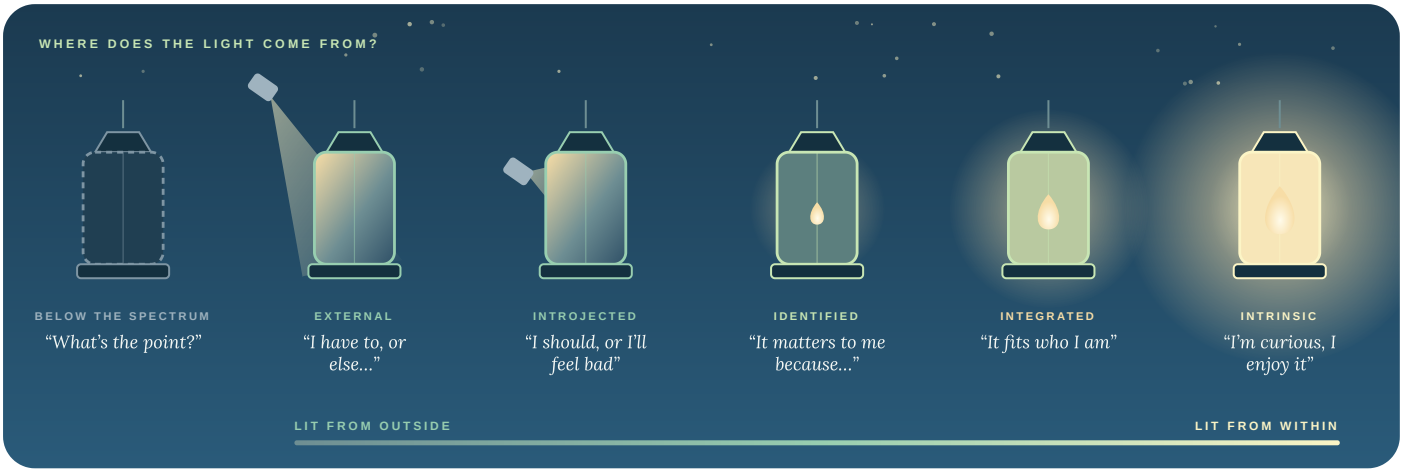
Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivation

Where our reasons come from, and how they can become more truly our own

Self-determination theory suggests that our reasons for doing things sit along a spectrum rather than in two boxes. At one end, the push comes from outside: pressure, rewards or guilt. At the other, it comes from within: interest, enjoyment and what we value. With time and the right conditions, a reason can move along the spectrum and feel more like our own (Ryan & Deci, 2000).



Outside light can fade when its source is taken away; light from within tends to keep going.

Internalisation: over time, and with the right conditions, a reason can move from one kind of light towards the other.

01 Two kinds of reason

both belong to ordinary life

EXTRINSIC

For something beyond the task

Doing something for an outcome separate from the activity itself: pay, a grade, approval, or avoiding a consequence. Extrinsic reasons range from feeling controlled to feeling fully endorsed.

"So I don't get in trouble." "They'll be proud." "It pays the rent."

INTRINSIC

For the task itself

Doing something because it is interesting, enjoyable or absorbing in its own right. The activity carries its own reward, and no one needs to be watching.

"I want to see how it turns out." "I lose track of time."

02 Not good versus bad

a more nuanced picture

Outside reasons can be yours

Many worthwhile things aren't enjoyable in themselves: medication, tax forms, a walk in the rain. When you genuinely value the outcome, extrinsic motivation can feel chosen and steady.

Rewards can crowd out interest

Expected, tangible rewards for something already enjoyable may reduce later interest in it (Deci et al., 1999). How large and widespread this effect is remains debated.

They can pull together

Intrinsic motivation and incentives can jointly predict performance; which matters more depends on the task and on how rewards are linked to it (Cerasoli et al., 2014).

03 What helps reasons move along

three basic psychological needs

Autonomy

a sense of choice and ownership

Noticing where you have a say, and linking the task to reasons that make sense to you.

Competence

feeling capable and making progress

Challenges that stretch without swamping you, and feedback you can actually use.

Relatedness

feeling connected and cared about

Doing things alongside people, or for people, who matter to you.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

Self-determination theory has a large research base across education, health, work and sport (Ryan & Deci, 2017), though much of it is correlational. Whether the five types truly sit on one continuum is debated: some analyses find weak support (Chemolli & Gagné, 2014), while a large meta-analysis largely supports a continuum-like structure (Howard et al., 2017). Treat the spectrum as a helpful map, not a fixed ladder; most activities draw on several reasons at once.

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04 Where do my reasons sit?

choose one goal or task

My goal or task: _____

Tick every band that applies, put the reason in your own words, and mark how strongly it pulls. Most goals draw on more than one.

EXTERNAL *"I have to, or else..."*	☐	_____	○ a little ○ a lot
INTROJECTED *"I should, or I'll feel bad"*	☐	_____	○ a little ○ a lot
IDENTIFIED *"It matters to me because..."*	☐	_____	○ a little ○ a lot
INTEGRATED *"It fits who I am"*	☐	_____	○ a little ○ a lot
INTRINSIC *"I enjoy it; I'm curious"*	☐	_____	○ a little ○ a lot
BELOW THE SPECTRUM *"What's the point?"*	☐	_____	○ a little ○ a lot

05 Are my needs being met?

0 = not at all · 10 = fully

Autonomy

how much choice do I feel?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

one small thing that could help

_____

Competence

how capable do I feel?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

one small thing that could help

_____

Relatedness

how connected do I feel?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

one small thing that could help

_____

06 Moving a reason along the spectrum

small shifts, not a personality overhaul

What do I genuinely value about this, or where it leads?

_____

_____

Where do I have a choice, even a small one?

_____

_____

What would a small sign of progress look like?

_____

_____

Who could do this with me, or cheer me on?

_____

_____

Rewards, deadlines or pressures I rely on

_____

Are they helping, or crowding out interest?

○ helping ○ a bit of both ○ crowding it out ○ not sure

07 Moments that came from within

this week, something I did because I wanted to

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

08 Looking back

what am I noticing?

What I've noticed about what really moves me

_____

_____

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

If interest has drained from most things for two weeks or more, especially alongside low mood, sleep or appetite changes, or hopelessness, please speak with your GP or a mental health professional; this can be a sign of depression rather than a motivation problem. If you are having thoughts of harming yourself, contact your local emergency number or a crisis line straight away.

SOURCES

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