
SUSTAINED MOTIVATION AND GOAL SETTING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SORTING AND DISCARDING

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ROAD MAP

- Activity
- Ambivalence to change
- Attention
- Motivational Interviewing
- Three psychological needs of intrinsic motivation
- Why positive thinking isn't enough
- The importance of “if/then” statements
- Q&A

ACTIVITY

- Who likes chocolate?
- Who wants chocolate right now?
- Who wants to volunteer in exchange for some chocolate?

WANTING WHAT YOU WANT TO WANT

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you want this chocolate right now?
- What is something you can think about that will make you want the chocolate a little bit less?
- What did you notice about this exercise?
- What was I trying to accomplish?

AMBIVALENCE TO CHANGE

- The first step to successful sorting and discarding is to increase self-awareness and insight into the hoarding problem
 - What matters most to you in the future?
- Ambivalence to change is a typical feature of hoarding behaviors (Thompkins, 2015)
- Ambivalence to change is present for all levels of insight and motivation to change.

AMBIVALENCE TO CHANGE

- Ambivalence
 - Short-term vs. long-term goals
 - Positive vs. negative emotions
 - Internal values vs. external pressures
- Cognitive Dissonance
 - Feelings of tension or unease when our beliefs and actions don't match
 - To resolve this tension, we either change our beliefs or our actions

ATTENTION

- “My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind” – William James

ATTENTION

- Part of our role in hoarding intervention is to help others increase their motivation to change by directing their attention to the pros and cons of saving and discarding.
- Correlation between hoarding behaviors and frontal lobe activity in areas related to attention, impulse control, judgement, and decision making
- Difficulty sustaining attention during sorting/discarding
- Heightened attentional focus during acquisition

ATTENTION

- Put all information on the table and help think through all possible options and scenarios
- Giving reminders
- Presenting alternatives
 - “On the other hand”
 - “I wonder if...”
- Using visual cues/reminders as a way to direct one’s attention

DECISION MATRIX

- Benefits of making a change
- Costs of making a change
- Benefits of not changing
- Costs of not changing



MOTIVATION



TYPES OF MOTIVATION

- Intrinsic Motivation
 - A natural inclination towards the action or activity as an end in itself.
 - Internal locus of control
 - Example: Decluttering to invite friends over for dinner
 - “Support” role

TYPES OF MOTIVATION

- Extrinsic Motivation
 - Activities or actions are performed for external ends or for instrumental reasons
 - External locus of control
 - There is a spectrum of externally regulated behaviors that can range from passive compliance to autonomously pursued
 - Example: Decluttering to prevent an eviction
 - “Enforcement” role

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION: REWARDS/PUNISHMENTS

- Offering external rewards to elicit change and motivate behavior may be effective in the short term, but is often unsuccessful for sustained long-term change.
- Rewards undermines intrinsic motivation and prompts an individual to view his/her behavior as being reward dependent and driven by external forces, not due to his/her own interests, values, or motivations.
- Similarly, external threats, deadlines, demands, and evaluations are also shown to decrease intrinsic motivation

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

- A therapeutic technique used to help overcome ambivalence to change by increasing motivation to make positive decisions towards reaching long term goals.
- Goal is to elicit change *from* clients (intrinsic motivation)
 - Focus on support
 - Explore extreme alternatives
 - Questions about the future
- Ask permission to communicate respect and encourage discussion of change

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

- Open-ended questions
- Reflective listening
- Normalizing
- Affirmations
- Feedback
- Summaries

(Sobell & Sobell, 2008)

FEEDBACK AND MINDSETS

- David Yeager, professor of psychology at University of Texas at Austin, studies motivation and performance in students
- In one study, Yeager provided critical feedback on students' essays (wrong word, unclear, give examples) and placed one of two sticky notes on each paper:
 - “I'm giving you these comments so that you'll have feedback on your paper”
 - “I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know you can reach them”
- Results showed significant increases in student motivation, effort, and performance
- Replicated with messages of “belonging” and found similarly significant results

(Toch & Headden, 2014)

FEEDBACK AND MINDSETS

- "Yeager and Cohen concluded that students were more motivated to take an extra step academically when they perceived their teachers' critical feedback as a genuine desire to help rather than as an expression of indifference..."
- Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset
- Feedback can promote or undermine trust and belonging
 - "I have high expectations for the number of items to discard because I know you can do it"
 - Reinforces trust, confidence, self-efficacy
 - "I want you to discard more items this time"

(Toch & Headden, 2014)

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUSTAINED MOTIVATION

- Motivation cannot be forced
 - Our role is to help as a collaborator and partner, not as an “expert”
- Focus on teaching the skills of sorting and discarding, rather than a quick reduction in clutter
- Maintaining a supportive relationship built on empathy is essential for sustained intrinsic motivation
 - Validating emotions and feelings, not necessarily behaviors
- Offer constructive feedback that increases self-efficacy

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

- SDT is a broad theory of motivation that explores the strength and type of motivation that energizes behavior and leads to performance and well-being
 - Explores the social context and motivators that either enhance or undermine autonomous motivation, and how individuals can access self-regulation from within
- There are three primary psychological needs that underlie intrinsic motivation:
 - Autonomy
 - Relatedness
 - Competence

SDT - AUTONOMY

- Arguably the strongest and most important predictor of intrinsically motivated behavior
- Offer as many opportunities for choice and self-direction as possible
 - When to sort, what area of the home to work on, which items are kept and discarded, etc.
- Increasing autonomy in extrinsically motivated behaviors
 - Internalization: adopting a value or a regulation
 - Integration: incorporating the regulation into a sense of self

SDT - AUTONOMY

“...And ‘choice’ is the operative word here. Sherrell says she couldn’t just let someone else organize for her and throw out her stuff. ‘One of the things that I knew intuitively but didn’t really understand until it was taught to me here, is that I have to be in control. I can’t just let people come in and take over. My anxiety just goes off the wall,” (Neighmond, 2010).

SDT - RELATEDNESS

- Development and maintenance of close, supportive, personal relationships
- Feelings of connectedness to others, and to the shared goal/outcome
 - Trust, empathy, unconditional positive regard, authenticity, etc.
- Normalizing the difficulty in sorting and discarding
- Support groups
 - Clutterers Anonymous, Facebook page “Clutter Movement”

SDT - RELATEDNESS

- Does sorting and discarding contribute to something larger than yourself?
 - Fostering relationships
 - Supporting other people
 - Connection to values/what really matters

SDT - COMPETENCE

- Perceived competence – i.e. the extent to which individuals feel they have the skills, tools, and resources to make progress towards their goal.
 - If the task is too difficult, individuals are prone to learned helplessness – the belief that nothing they do will make a difference
- To increase perceived competence, provide optimal challenges and frequent relevant feedback
 - Reflective listening and open ended questions to identify opportunities for coaching, education, and skill building

SDT - COMPETENCE

- Teaching three-pile system of sorting and discarding
- Learning how to manage anxiety and other negative emotions
- Setting routines and habits for sorting and discarding

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY RECAP

- The three fundamental psychological needs of intrinsic motivation are:
 - Autonomy
 - Relatedness
 - Competence



GOAL SETTING



GOAL SETTING: SETTING THE STAGE

- Spend time discussing goals and outcomes upfront, before jumping into sorting and discarding
- Think less about long term goals, and more about short term goals and establishing good processes
- Progress isn't linear: be prepared for successes and set-backs
- Goals can be framed as “prevention” goals or “promotion” goals
- Provide feedback and promote self-efficacy as often as possible
- SMART Goals

MOTIVATION THROUGH CONSCIOUS GOAL SETTING

- Goal setting is important for attaining a positive future outcome, for increasing motivation, and building self-efficacy
 - Individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to set loftier goals, have higher goal commitment, and to respond with greater efforts to setbacks
 - Reaching milestones can make long-term goals feel more attainable

GOAL SPECIFICITY

- Specific and difficult goals lead to the highest performance (Locke, 1996)
 - Vague goals can be easily redefined to accommodate lower performance
- "Try your best" can decrease effort and performance
- Goal specificity can be increased by quantification (reduce clutter by 25%) or by enumeration (Sort in your living room, kitchen, and bedroom before next week)

GOAL COMMITMENT

- High commitment to goals is attained when:
 - One believes that the goal is important
 - Link to values and self-concept
 - One believes that the goal is attainable (or that progress can be made towards it)
- Three paths to commitment:
 - Adjust the goal
 - Increase capability through training and experience
 - Change perspective on capability through confidence and role modeling

CHANGE VS. THE STATUS QUO

“To counter apathy, most change agents focus on presenting an inspiring vision of the future. This is an important message to convey, but it’s not the type of communication that should come first. If you want people to take risks, you need first to show what’s wrong with the present. To drive people out of their comfort zones, you have to cultivate dissatisfaction, frustration, or anger at the current state of affairs, making it a guaranteed loss. “The greatest communicators of all time,” says communication expert Nancy Duarte—who has spent her career studying the shape of superb presentations—start by establishing “what is: here’s the status quo.” Then, they “compare that to what could be,” making “that gap as big as possible”

-Adam Grant, professor of psychology and management, The Wharton School

WHY POSITIVE THINKING ISN'T ENOUGH

- “Positive thinking fools our minds into perceiving that we’ve already attained our goal, slackening our readiness to pursue it.” –Gabrielle Oettingen, Professor of Psychology, NYU
- Through imagining a positive future while taking a realistic look at the obstacles in the way, people are more likely to reach their goals and put in the necessary effort to bring them to be
- Oettingen developed two specific goal-setting exercises that have been shown to foster successful goal setting and implementation

MENTAL CONTRASTING

- Mental Contrasting is a cognitive goal-setting exercise where one contrasts an ideal future state with the present reality, challenges, and obstacles
 - Step 1: Imaging that a desired future outcome has been attained (indulging)
 - Step 2: Reflecting on the present reality that gets in the way of achieving the goal (dwelling)
 - The order matters!

MENTAL CONTRASTING

- Outcomes
 - Increases the desirability and feasibility of a goal
 - Changes perception of reality
 - From “dead-ends” to ”obstacles to be overcome”
 - Increases feelings of “energization”
 - Cardiovascular response (increase in systolic blood pressure)
 - Brings motivational and behavioral mechanisms into awareness

IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

- “If-then” plans that help overcome obstacles and setbacks
 - If I face situation X, then I will perform goal-directed response Y
 - Ex: If I become anxious while sorting, then I will stop and listen to music for 10 minutes
- Creates a strong link between the obstacle and the response, making the response pre-determined, automatic, swift, and efficient

BENEFITS OF MENTAL CONTRASTING / IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

- Increased self-reported self-discipline and self-esteem, compared to a control group
- Increased goal attainment
 - In one study of middle aged women seeking to exercise more, those in the MCII group logged 2x the amount of hours of exercise as the women in the control group (Oettingen & Gollwitzer, 2010)
 - MCII was found to double the rate of self-chosen goal attainment in individuals with mild to moderate depression after 3 weeks

MCII AND SORTING AND DISCARDING

- Balanced discussion of the desired outcome, obstacles, and intentions/plans
- Can be practiced as a formal exercise or through informal discussion
- Keep Implementation Intentions in a visible accessible place

RECAP: RESEARCH-BASED STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING MOTIVATION AND GOAL SETTING

- Wanting What You Want to Want
- Pros and Cons
- Motivational Interviewing
- Mental Contrasting
- Implementation Intentions

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Q&A

