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Intrinsic Motivation for Participation in Exercise



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WHAT IS MOTIVATION?

- Motivation = the driving force behind behaviours.
- Two main types:
- Extrinsic: driven by external rewards (appearance, medals, social approval).
- Intrinsic: driven by internal satisfaction (enjoyment, mastery, challenge).



DEFINING INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Participation for the pleasure and satisfaction derived directly from the activity.

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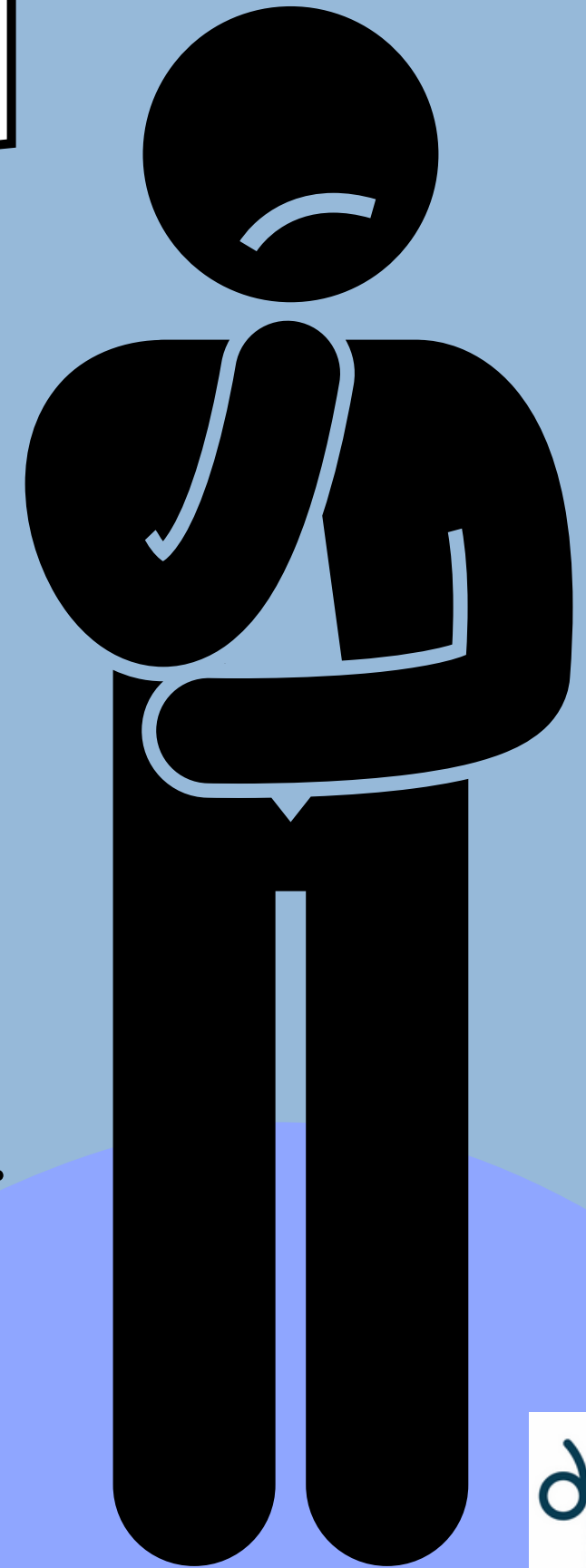
- Curiosity
- Sense of competence
- Enjoyment and flow



SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY (SDT)

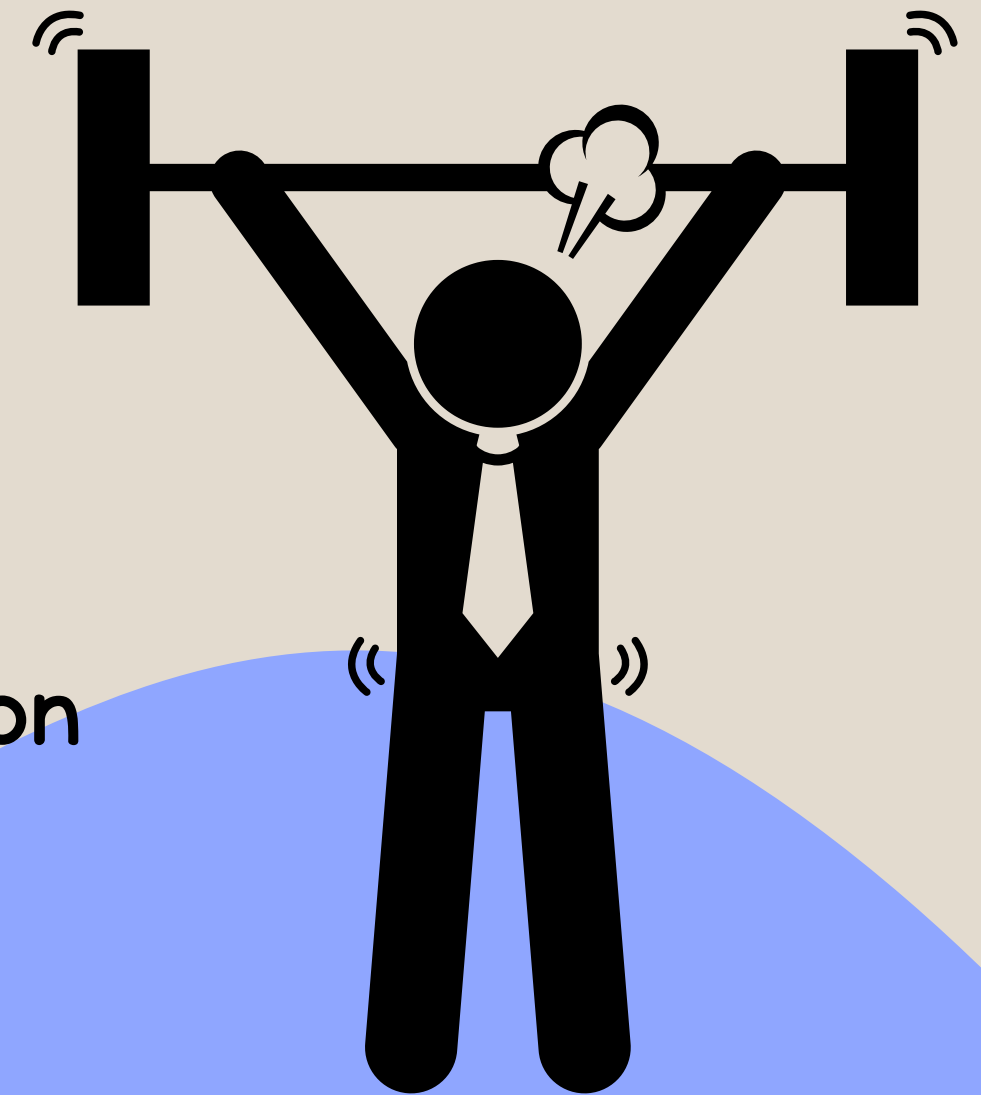
- Three basic psychological needs:
 - Autonomy: sense of choice and control.
 - Competence: feeling effective and capable.
 - Relatedness: feeling connected to others.
- When these needs are satisfied → intrinsic motivation increases.

DECI & RYAN (1985)

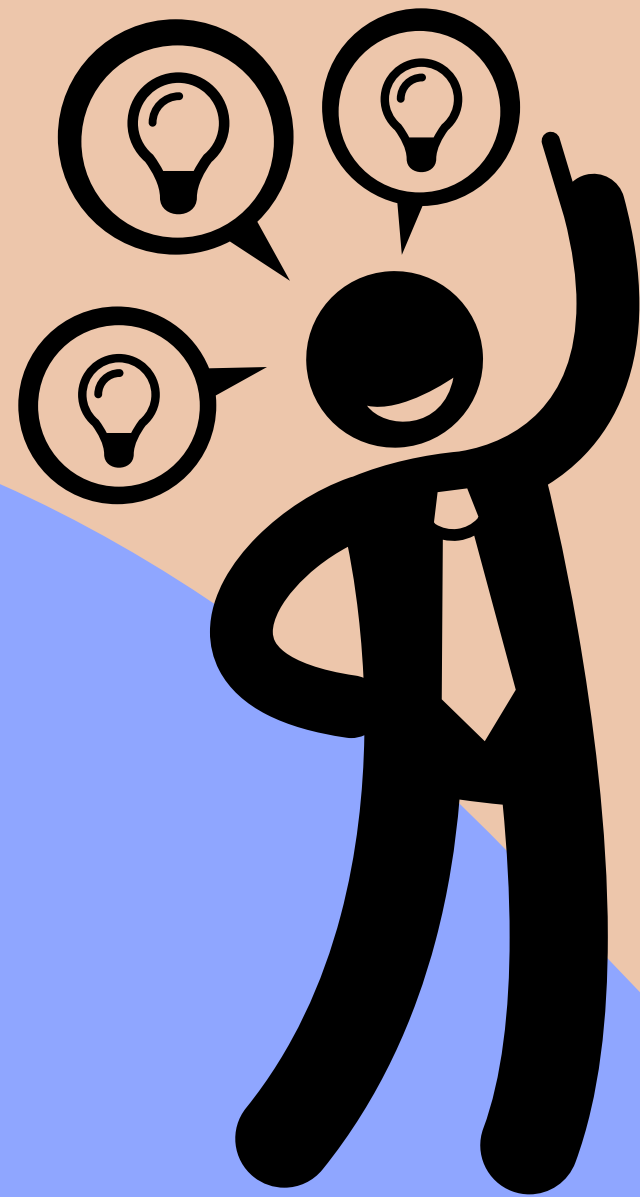


BENEFITS OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION IN EXERCISE

- Greater long-term adherence to physical activity.
- Improved psychological well-being.
- Increased resilience and reduced risk of dropout.
- Exercise becomes self-sustaining (not dependent on external rewards).



EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION IN EXERCISE



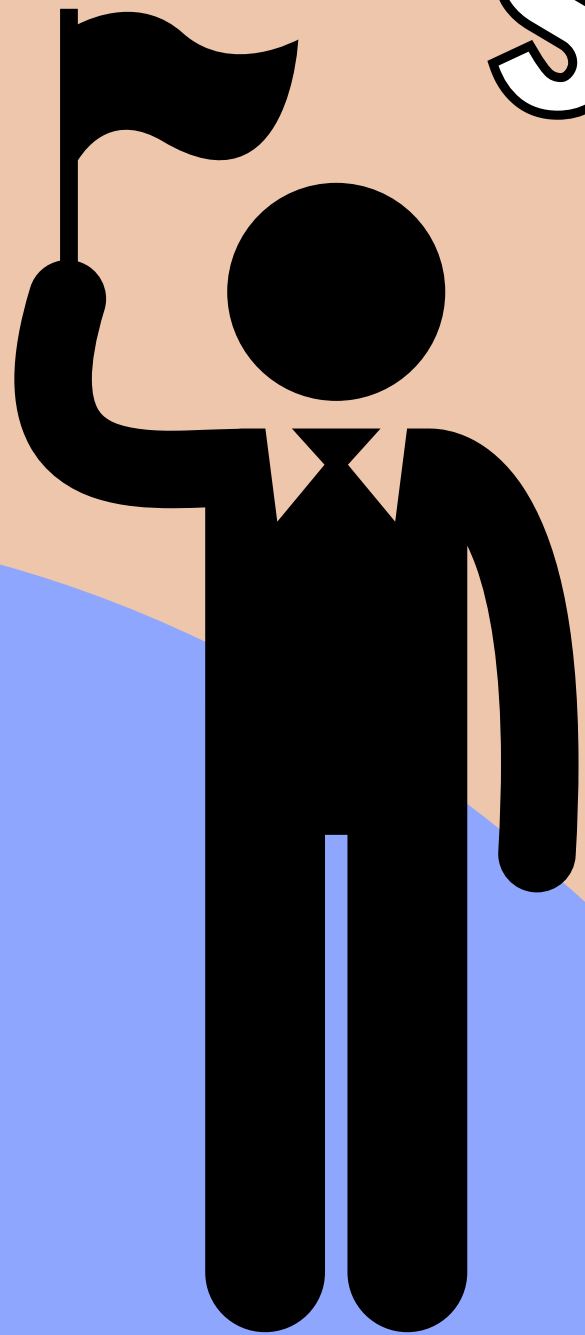
- Exercising to lose weight or change appearance.
- Joining fitness classes to gain social approval or avoid criticism.
- Going to the gym to meet the expectations of others (family, coach, peers).
- Running because of financial incentives (e.g., workplace challenges).
- Training to win a medal, trophy, or prize.

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION IN EXERCISE

- Jogging because it feels relaxing.
- Dancing for the joy of movement.
- Playing basketball for the thrill of competition and skill development.
- Practicing yoga for self-discovery and flow.



STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION



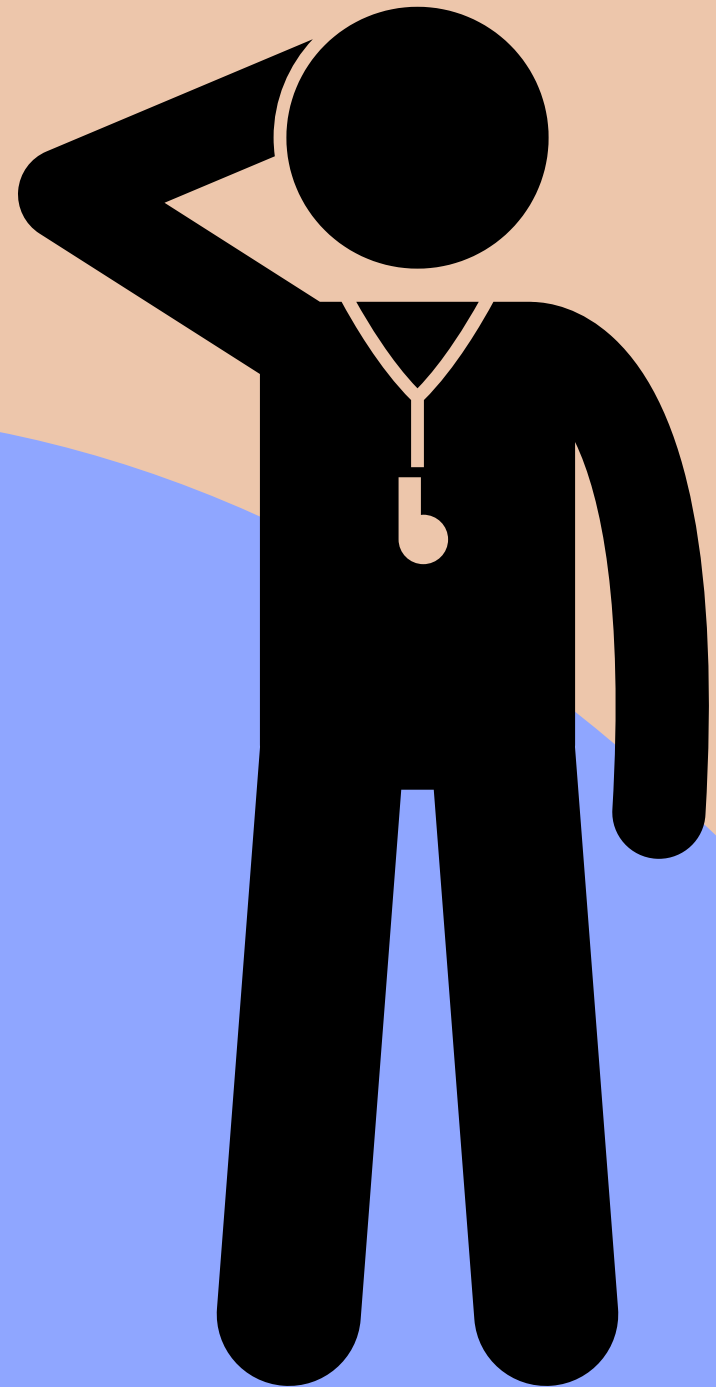
- Promote Autonomy – Offer choices in type/intensity of exercise.
- Build Competence – Provide clear goals, feedback, and progressive challenges.
- Foster Relatedness – Encourage supportive group settings, peer encouragement.
- Focus on Enjoyment – Incorporate play, variety, and personal meaning.
- Shift Focus from Outcomes to Process – Emphasize effort, mastery, and growth over external rewards.

MOTIVATION THROUGH NATURE-BASED EXERCISE

- Connection with the environment, fresh air, natural landscapes, and sunlight.
- Activities like hiking, open-water swimming, outdoor yoga, and cycling in nature.
- Enhances sense of freedom and autonomy (non-restrictive setting).
- Promotes flow states and mindfulness (being present in the moment).
- Builds well-being and enjoyment → supports long-term adherence.



PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR COACHES & TRAINERS



- Create enjoyable and varied programs.
- Highlight personal progress over comparison with others.
- Encourage reflection: “What do you enjoy about this activity?”
- Use positive feedback to reinforce mastery and effort.
- Cultivate a supportive exercise community.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Intrinsic motivation is the most sustainable driver of exercise participation.
- It develops when psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met.
- Fostering intrinsic motivation leads to lifelong physical activity and improved well-being.





**"PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO
STICK WITH EXERCISE WHEN
THEY LOVE THE PROCESS, NOT
JUST THE OUTCOME."**

**THANK
YOU!**

References

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