

How Can You Motivate Participation in Physical Activity and Sport?

People have different external and internal motivations for taking part in physical activity and sport. Often, their motivations are complex and sit on a continuum between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations.

High	Motivation/Regulation		Motives	
	Self-determination ↑ ↓ Low	Extrinsic	Intrinsic	Enjoyment, satisfaction
Integrated			Confirming sense of self	
Identified			Achieve personal goals	
Introjected			Sense of obligation	
External			Avoid punishment	
Amotivation			None	

The higher up the continuum you are:

1. the more self-determination you have
2. the more in control of your behaviours you are
3. the better self-regulation you have

Motivating participants

You will need to use a **variety of motivational strategies** to encourage individuals to engage in physical activity and retain them. Often, both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards can be used together or interchangeably to **engage and retain participants** as their motivations can change over time.

Extrinsic Motivators <small>Driven by External Demand</small>	Intrinsic Motivators <small>Driven by Internal Demand</small>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Financial incentives (e.g., discounts, vouchers, loyalty cards) · Approval (e.g., not wanting to disappoint or let someone down) · Material rewards (e.g., trophies, certificates) · Avoid negative outcomes (e.g., being dropped from the team) · Reduce anxiety or guilt · Health guidelines (e.g., GP or World Health Organisation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Enjoyment · Learn and develop new skills · Make friends · Improve mental and physical health · Improve self confidence · Praise, encouragement and recognition · Sharing · Pride

Using extrinsic motivators to re-engage participants

Mo (32)

Running Coach

"I started the running group 4 years ago, initially with work colleagues to support them to complete the 'couch to 5K' challenge. The club has now grown to over 90 members with 3 groups for those that are just starting or returning to running, for fun or social, and for those that are more advanced and want to enter events. One of the original members has stopped attending, she's had a tough year, but she'd made so much progress achieving the goals we'd set together."

Sam (43)

Member of running group

"I started running with Mo for a 'couch to 5K' challenge with some of our work colleagues, after completing the challenge I continued with running a few times a week and have even taken part in some local events. It's been a difficult year, with starting a new job and experiencing some illness I've not been to running club for over 3 months and I'm worried that I'm not going to be able to keep up with the rest of the group."

Mo

"Hey Sam, how are you??? We've missed you at running club."

Sam

"Hey Mo, I'm ok thanks, feeling much better. Missing running club too!!"

Mo

"Great to hear that you're feeling better! No pressure to come back before you're ready. I know you really loved running and the group socials, so it would be great to see you back."

Sam

"Thanks Mo, I'm just worried about what I'm going to be able to do, I don't think I can keep up with the group!!"

Mo

"I've got a group of newbies starting this week, they're all 'return to running'. It would be great if you could come along to support and share your experience of when you first started and how you went from couch to 5K to completing your first half marathon!! Perhaps you could join in the run also?? As a thank you for the pep talk I'll discount your 1st month's fees. What do you think?"

Sam

"Thanks for asking, I don't know..... I'll think about it. Send me the details and I'll let you know."

Mo

"Great to see you last night! and well done on the run, you smashed it!!"

Your journey really inspired the new group, and most have said they will come again next week! Hope I can count you in also? We can start setting some goals to help you make the event you want to complete in a few months' time!"

Sam

"Hey Mo! Can't believe how great today went at the half marathon event... thanks for all your support! What's next!!!"

Mo

"Knowing Sam and how much she loved being part of the club and how much progress she had made, I knew that if I could engage her, I could get her back running.

Sam loves helping other people and by asking her to support me by giving my new group a pep talk I knew she would want to get involved. Sam understands what running does for her, I just had to provide the opportunity to remind her! The thought of helping others and the reward of a discount was enough to spark her motivation to return to running, which has gone from strength to strength, with Sam setting herself some fantastic goals to achieve!"

Reflect

What type of extrinsic motivators did the coach use?

How did those extrinsic motivators help the participant to return to activity?

Bruce's top tips for motivating participants

1. **Benevolence.** This is a superpower! Benevolence or kindness is the intrinsic desire to do good for others. Understanding your participants and what motivates them and showing a genuine interest in their lives and having their best interests at heart can help you to develop strategies to influence them.
-

2. **Make it fun!** A crucial factor in any physical activity or sport and central in creating a positive environment is that it is fun!

3. **Encouragement.** This is free, easy, and makes a huge impact, although it is often overlooked, can become bland, or is no longer felt as necessary. Encouragement should come from you, and you should also encourage participants to encourage each other. Encouragement is a great motivator that helps participants feel good about themselves, that they matter, and that others care about them, conferring a sense of belonging.

4. **Autonomy.** Giving participants choice and control of what they do helps them feel they are taking part because they choose to do so. They then feel they are an important part of the activity.

5. **Competence.** If participants believe they are doing a good job, performing well, and achieving challenging goals then their self-esteem is increased.

6. **Relatedness.** People are motivated by activities that allow them to form and enjoy good relationships. A sense of shared experience, to experience caring, appreciate others, receive recognition, and co-operate, develops a sense of belonging and commitment towards others.

7. **Goals.** Goals give a focus and internal pressure to persist. They must be interesting and meaningful (participants should want to do it) and should be known by others (friends as well as you). Ensure there is a balance of outcome goals and behavioural goals.

Outcome goals focus on the end result and are number-focused such as a competitive result of winning a match, an event, or a medal.

Behaviour goals focus on how you act or behave and are the actions or steps needed to achieve an outcome goal e.g., planning in time into your weekly routine to meal prep ensuring you are appropriately fuelled to exercise 3 times a week.

Reflect

How have you motivated people to take part in physical activity and or sport in the past?

What strategies did you use to get them interested?

What strategies have you used to maintain and retain their interest?

Did the same strategies work for everyone? If not why?

How easy or difficult did you find it to motivate others?

Consider

Consider the ways in which you can help participants develop a sense of belonging and support e.g., starting a social programme.

Have a go

Discuss goals with your participants. Help them adjust the goals and add new goals ensuring a balance of outcome and behaviour goals.

© 2023 UK Coaching. All rights reserved.

Registration Number 2092919

Charity Registration Number 327354

Registered Offices at: 2 City Walk, South Bank, Leeds LS11 9AR