

CHAPTER 3: What Factors Motivate Students to Learn?

“Ambrose, Susan A.; Bridges, Michael W.; DiPietro, Michele; Lovett, Marsha C.; Norman, Marie K. (2010-04-16). How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching (The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series). Wiley Publishing.”

Principle: Students’ motivation generates, directs, and sustains what they do to learn.

Cases:

My Students Are Going to Love This—NOT (Professor Tyrone Hill)

"I thought that students would be excited by the topic and would appreciate reading some of the classic works."

"I guess when it comes right down to it, most students do not much care about philosophy."

A Third of You Will Not Pass This Course (Professor Valencia Robles)

"This is a very difficult course. You will need to work harder than you have ever worked in a course and still a third of you will not pass."

"This class had the worst attitude I have ever seen and the students seemed to be consumed by an overall sense of lethargy and apathy. I am beginning to think that today’s students are just plain lazy."

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THESE STORIES?

In both cases, a **lack of engagement with the material** seems to be at the root of the problem.

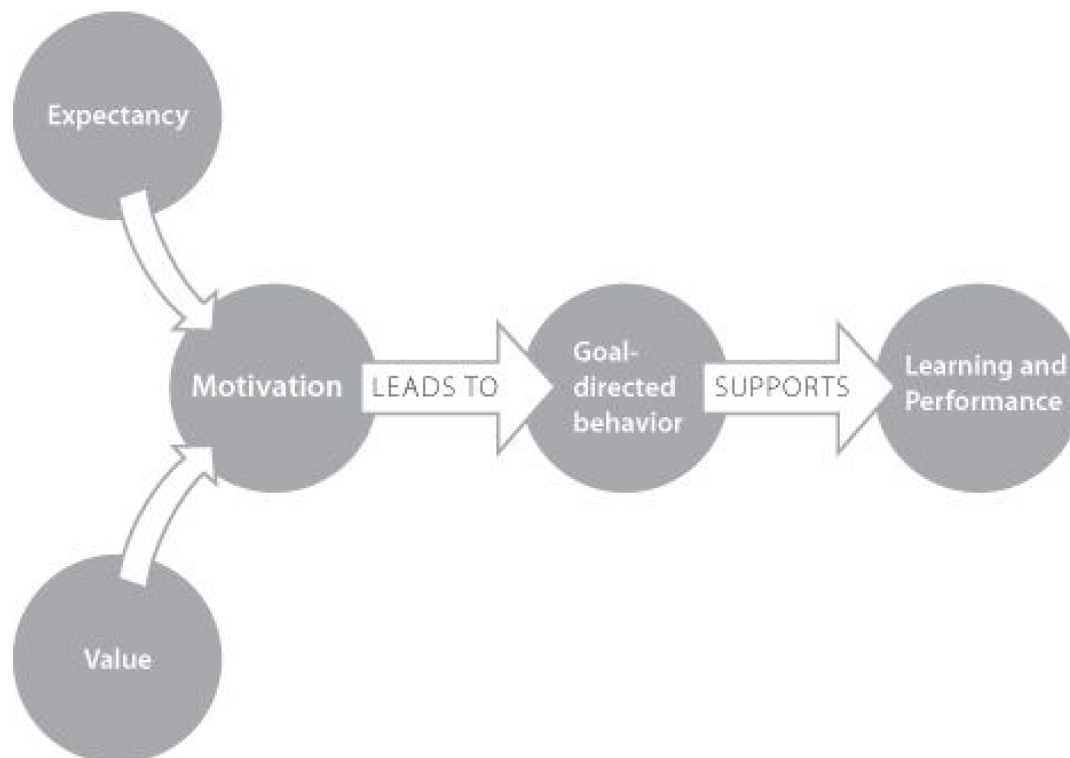
What happened to the motivation? What is motivation?

Motivation refers to the personal investment that an individual has in reaching a desired state or outcome (Maehr & Meyer, 1997).

In the context of learning, motivation influences the direction, intensity, persistence, and quality of the learning behaviors in which students engage.

There are two important concepts that are central to understanding motivation:

1. The **subjective value** of a goal and
2. The **expectancies**, or expectations for successful attainment of that goal.



Goals (Motivated?)

To say that someone is motivated tells us little unless we say what the person is motivated to do. Thus, goals serve as the basic organizing feature of motivated behavior

Goals provide the context in which values and expectancies derive meaning and influence motivation. Hence, we begin with a brief discussion of goals.

- Performance goals
 - Performance-approach goals
 - Performance-avoidant goals.
- Learning goals
- Affective goals
- Social goals

Performance goals involve protecting a desired self-image and projecting a positive reputation and public persona.

Students with **performance-approach goals** focus on attaining competence by meeting normative standards.

Students with **performance-avoidance goals**, on the other hand, focus on avoiding incompetence by meeting standards.

When guided by **learning goals**, in contrast to performance goals, *students try to gain competence and truly learn what an activity or task can teach them.*

As you can imagine, if we want our students to gain the deep understanding that comes from exploration and intellectual risk-taking (a learning goal) but they want only to do what is necessary to get a good grade (a performance goal), we may not obtain the kinds of learning behaviors and outcomes that we desire.

Relevant to this point is the fact that **affective goals** and **social goals** can play an important role in the classroom (Ford, 1992).

For instance, if a student's goals in an industrial design project course

include learning and applying fundamental design principles (a learning goal), making friends (a social goal), and engaging in stimulating activity (an affective goal), then allowing the student to work on the course project as part of a group provides her the opportunity to satisfy multiple goals at the same time and potentially increases her motivation.

Value (Subjective value of the goals)

A goal's importance, often referred to as its subjective value, is one of the key features influencing the motivation to pursue it.

- Attainment value
- Intrinsic value
- Instrumental value

The first is **attainment value**, which represents the satisfaction that one gains from mastery and accomplishment of a goal or task.

A second source of value is **intrinsic value**, which represents the satisfaction that one gains simply from doing the task rather than from a particular outcome of the task.

Instrumental value represents the degree to which an activity or goal helps one accomplish other important goals, such as gaining what are traditionally referred to as extrinsic rewards.

Expectancies (What do I get? Can I do it?)

Although one must value a desired outcome in order to be motivated to pursue it, value alone is insufficient to motivate behavior.

People are also motivated to pursue goals and outcomes that they believe they can successfully achieve.

Conversely, if they do not expect to successfully achieve a desired goal or outcome, they will not be motivated to engage in the behaviors necessary to achieve it.

Motivational theorists refer to these expectations as expectancies. Here we describe two forms of expectancies that help inform our understanding of motivated behavior.

- Outcome expectancies
- Efficacy expectancies

Outcome expectancies reflect the belief that specific actions will bring about a desired outcome (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

“If I do all the assigned readings and participate in class discussions, I will be able to learn the material well enough to solve problems on the exam and achieve a passing grade.”

Whereas positive outcome expectancies are necessary for motivated behavior, they are insufficient on their own.

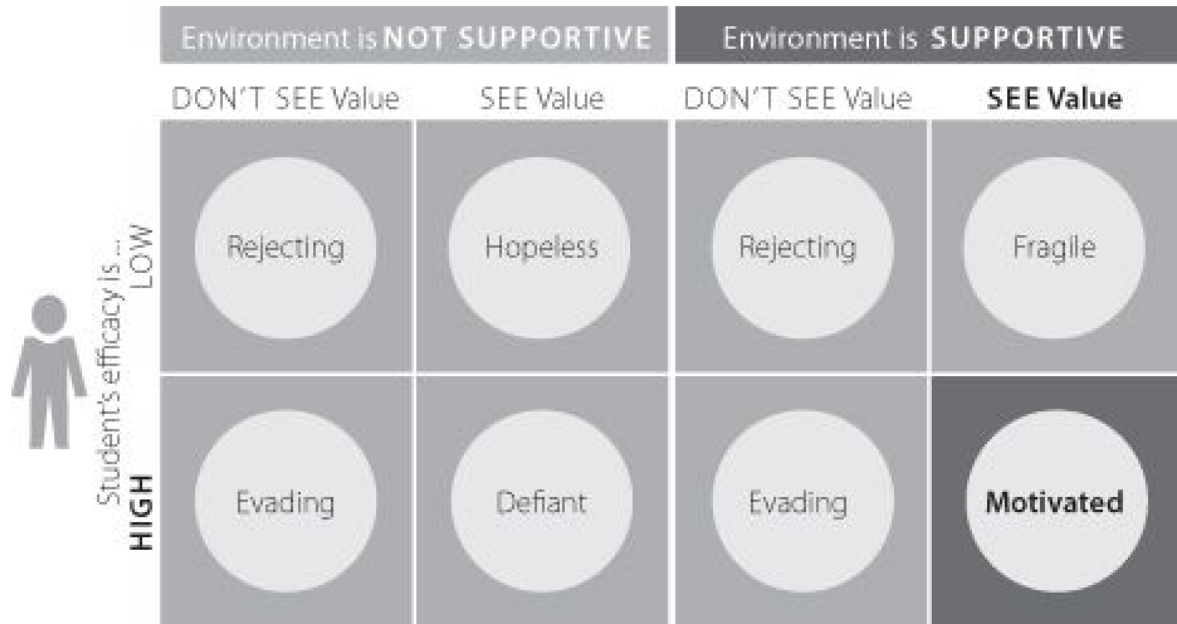
Efficacy expectancies represent the belief that one is capable of identifying, organizing, initiating, and executing a course of action that will bring about a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997).

So in order to hold a positive expectancy for success, a student must not only believe that doing the assigned work can earn a passing grade, she must also believe that she is capable of doing the work necessary to earn a passing grade.

What determines a student’s expectation for success? One important influence is prior experience in similar contexts.

How Perceptions of the Environment Affect the Interaction of Value and Expectancies

Value and expectancies do not operate in a vacuum. Indeed, they interact within the broader environmental context in which they exist



WHAT STRATEGIES DOES THE RESEARCH SUGGEST?

Strategies to Establish Value

- Connect the Material to Students' Interests
- Provide Authentic, Real-World Tasks
- Show Relevance to Students' Current Academic Lives
- Demonstrate the Relevance of Higher-Level Skills to Students' Future Professional Lives
- Identify and Reward What You Value
- Show Your Own Passion and Enthusiasm for the Discipline

Strategies That Help Students Build Positive Expectancies

- Ensure Alignment of Objectives, Assessments, and Instructional Strategies
- Identify an Appropriate Level of Challenge
- Create Assignments That Provide the Appropriate Level of Challenge
- Provide Early Success Opportunities
- Articulate Your Expectations
- Provide Rubrics
- Provide Targeted Feedback
- Be Fair
- Educate Students About the Ways We Explain Success and Failure
- Describe Effective Study Strategies

Strategies That Address Value and Expectancies

- Provide Flexibility and Control
- Give Students an Opportunity to Reflect