How to Foster Motivation?

The Need-Based Motivating Compass as a Source of Inspiration

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Motivational Intuition

The question of how one can optimally motivate others is intriguing. Probably every socializing agent who is in charge of motivating others has an opinion on this matter. Motivating agents (e.g., teachers, coaches, managers, or parents) often spontaneously mention the importance of providing growth-oriented feed- back, using humor, offering choice, and being clear about expectations. To motivate others, socializing agents typically rely on their motivational intuition; that is, their personal impression of what a particular individual in a particular situation needs to stay motivated. This initial "raw" intuition may become sharpened and re- fined through daily experience. As socializing agents find out which motivational

practices work and which practices do not, they develop a more nuanced under- standing of their motivating role. Yet socializing agents' motivational intuition may be inaccurate in certain situations, thereby misguiding them. To illustrate, some people think that the use of rewards serves as a steppingstone for individuals to become more committed and gain interest in an activity. However, if rewards are used to control and seduce others, they have the opposite effect (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). To correct such inaccurate beliefs and optimize socializing agents' skills to motivate others, they can supplement their intuition and experience with a strong theoretical foundation. In this essay, we discuss the usefulness of a need- based motivating compass based on self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017) as a source of inspiration to motivate others in practice.

Basic Psychological Needs: A Theoretical Foundation for Motivating Others

In SDT, the theoretical starting point to formulate guidelines for optimally motivating others is the observation that all individuals have a set of basic psychological needs: the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Soenens, 2020). When people's need for autonomy is met, they feel a sense of volition and psychological freedom in their actions, thoughts, and feelings. When people report competence satisfaction, they feel capable to execute tasks, and they can optimally use and extend their skills. When people report feeling loved and cared for by others who truly matter to them, they experience relatedness satisfaction. In contrast, when these needs are frustrated, people have experiences of pressure and obligation (autonomy frustration), inadequacy and failure (competence frustration), and exclusion and loneliness (relatedness frustration).

When these needs are satisfied, people display autonomous motivation or "wantivation," a high-quality type of motivation fostering engagement, persistence, and well-being (see Essay

3.3 by Vansteenkiste and Soenens). Instead, when these needs get frustrated, individuals are more likely to develop poor-quality motivation (i.e., "mustivation") or may become discouraged and demotivated all together, which then opens the door for disengagement, drop-out, and ill-being.

From this theoretical foundation, it follows logically what socializing agents can do to promote optimal motivation: adopt a need-supportive socialization style (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Soenens, Deci, & Vansteenkiste, 2017). If people perceive socializing agents as more need-supportive, they report greater need satisfaction, engagement, and personal well-being (see Essay 2.4 by Soenens and Vansteenkiste). In addition, they themselves start to interact with those around them in a more need-supportive and motivating way. Indeed, the effects of a need-supportive style spread like wildfire. To illustrate, elementary school children who perceived their mothers as more autonomy-supportive reported greater need satisfaction which, in turn, was related to a more autonomy-supportive style of interacting with their brother or sister (Van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2015). Need satisfaction has a vitalizing effect, leading one to be more open and curious for the other's perspective. Alternatively, need frustration comes with greater stress, which elicits a more narrow-minded tunnel perspective, with the risk of bypassing or neglecting the other person's viewpoint (Mabbe et al., 2018).

A Need-Based Motivating Compass

Because there are many in-roads to need satisfying experiences, socializing agents can rely on a multitude of motivational practices. At the same time, individuals' needs can be thwarted to different degrees and in different ways. The motivating compass shown in Figure 8.8.1 (Aelterman et al., 2019) brings some structure to the diversity of (de)motivating practices. Within this compass, (de)motivating practices are located in different areas, denoting a specific

(de)motivating approach. This graphical localization of practices provides a helicopter view on motivating practices. Much like one has a better viewpoint of what happens on the ground from a helicopter, this compass provides a more integrative and in-depth overview of how different motivating practices can be situated vis-à-vis each other.

Evidence for this motivating compass—technically called a *circumplex*—has been obtained in diverse contexts and populations, including secondary school students, teachers in secondary schools and in higher education, athletes and coaches of both individuals and team sports, and parents of toddlers (Aelterman et al., 2019; Delrue et al., 2019a; Mabbe, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2022; Vermote et al., 2020). This compass is characterized by two dimensions. The horizontal dimension of "need supporting—need thwarting" denotes the extent to which a socializing agent supports or rather thwarts individuals' psychological needs. The vertical dimension of "high directiveness—low directiveness" denotes the extent to which a socializing agent takes the lead in the interaction or rather transfers the lead more to those who need to be motivated, thereby leaving the initiative more to students, children, or athletes.

Along these two dimensions, eight different motivational approaches are identified: a participative and an attuning approach are part of an autonomy- supportive style; a guiding and clarifying approach are part of a structuring style; a demanding and domineering approach are part of a controlling style; and an abandoning and awaiting approach are part of a chaotic style. A more detailed de- scription of each of these eight different approaches can be found in Table 8.8.1. Each approach can be characterized by its degree of need-supportiveness and directiveness. To illustrate, while a participative approach is low on directiveness and fairly high on need-supportiveness, a demanding approach is high on directiveness and fairly high on need-thwartingness.

This circumplex can be considered a compass because it provides *direction* to socializing agents' interactions with others. The compass indicates which practices are most desirable because some motivating approaches in the circumplex relate more directly to individuals' basic psychological needs and motivation than do others. To illustrate, the attuning and guiding approaches yield the strongest positive relations with athletes' engagement and high-quality motivation because these two approaches feed directly into individuals' psychological need satisfaction. For this reason, these two approaches on the far right are indicated (in the original figure) in bright green in Figure 8.8.1. This pattern of correlates is somewhat less pronounced for practices situated next to the attuning and guiding approaches (i.e., the participative and clarifying approaches in the middle right, indicated in light green). The correlates even become negative when moving away from these two motivating approaches to the demotivating approaches on the other side of the compass (i.e., the domineering and abandoning approaches on the far left; Delrue et al., 2019b). Because these two demotivating approaches threaten athletes' psychological needs most directly, these approaches are associated most strongly with poor-quality motivation (i.e., mustivation) and even discouragement (i.e., amotivation). Because these two approaches are a "no-go zone," they are colored (in the original figure) in bright red in Figure 8.8.1. The awaiting and demanding approaches in the middle left, in contrast, are placed in light red because they carry a less pronounced demotivating effect.

Practical Value of the Compass

This motivating compass can sharpen the motivational intuition of socializing agents because it provides deeper insights in what it means to interact with others in growth-promoting ways and how this can be achieved in practice. For instance, while some socializing agents equate autonomy-support with the provision of choice and, hence, narrow the concept of

autonomy-support down to the participative approach, an autonomy-supportive style is broader because it also involves an attuning approach. In fact, in many instances, an attuning approach forms the starting place to interact with others. When attuning, socializing agents begin with taking the frame of reference of others to fully understand the person's preferences, sentiments, or opinions. This clearer understanding of the other person's viewpoint then allows socializing agents to use other motivating practices in a way that is attuned to the person's perspective. For instance, when a child resists engaging in a required task, a teacher or parent may offer choice in the way a task is performed or in its timing (i.e., a participative approach), provide a helpful strategy to overcome the encountered obstacle during task engagement (i.e., a guiding approach), clarify a misunderstanding on what is expected exactly (i.e., a clarifying approach), or empathically recognize the effort it takes (i.e., an attuning approach). As described in greater detail in Table 8.8.1, each motivating approach consists of a number of motivating practices that socializing agents can rely on in practice.

To ongoingly maximize individuals' engagement, we maintain that it is critical for socializing agents to *calibrate* their approach, thereby engaging in motivational tailoring (Vansteenkiste et al., 2019). Such calibration involves shifting back and forth between different motivating approaches in the right half of the compass, thereby taking the person's perspective and the situational demands at hand into ac- count. To illustrate, in relation to an indecisive person, it is desirable to complement a participative approach with a guiding approach to help the person see and weigh the pros and cons of a particular decision, especially if such decisions have high im- portance (Waterschoot et al., 2019). With respect to the situation, being attuning as a parent may suffice when talking about familiar topics that children are enthusiastic about (e.g., leisure-time activities). Yet parents do well to combine an attuning approach with a clarifying

approach when entering “new territory” (e.g., sexuality among early adolescents; Mauras, Grolnick, & Friendly, 2013).

Finally, the compass also sheds light on some of the pitfalls associated with the incorrect application of specific approaches in practice. For instance, the belief that a participative approach may result in endless discussions, thereby eliciting chaos, may hold some truth because the participative approach is situated next to the awaiting approach. To avoid this practical pitfall of the participative approach, it is critical to build in sufficient clarity and guidance, the motivating approaches situated in opposition to chaos. The compass also indicates that structure may be perceived as rigid and autonomy-constraining when introduced in a forceful and demanding way. Also in this case the compass offers an antidote. That is, the clarifying approach can best be coupled with a more attuning (e.g., providing a rationale) or participative (i.e., asking for input regarding introduced guidelines) approach to optimize its benefits (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012).

Conclusion: Toward Theory-Driven Experimentation

Motivating others on a day-to-day basis is a challenge for many socializing agents. To successfully take up this role, we encourage socializing agents to creatively experiment with different motivating strategies, thereby ongoingly adjusting their approach as a function of the unfolding situation. The motivating compass presented in this essay provides a theoretical foundation to help socializing agents sharpen their motivational intuition. As such, the compass serves as a practical guideline to inspire socializing agents in fulfilling their motivating role.

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Figure 8.8.1. Graphical representation of the motivating compass (Aelterman et al., 2019).

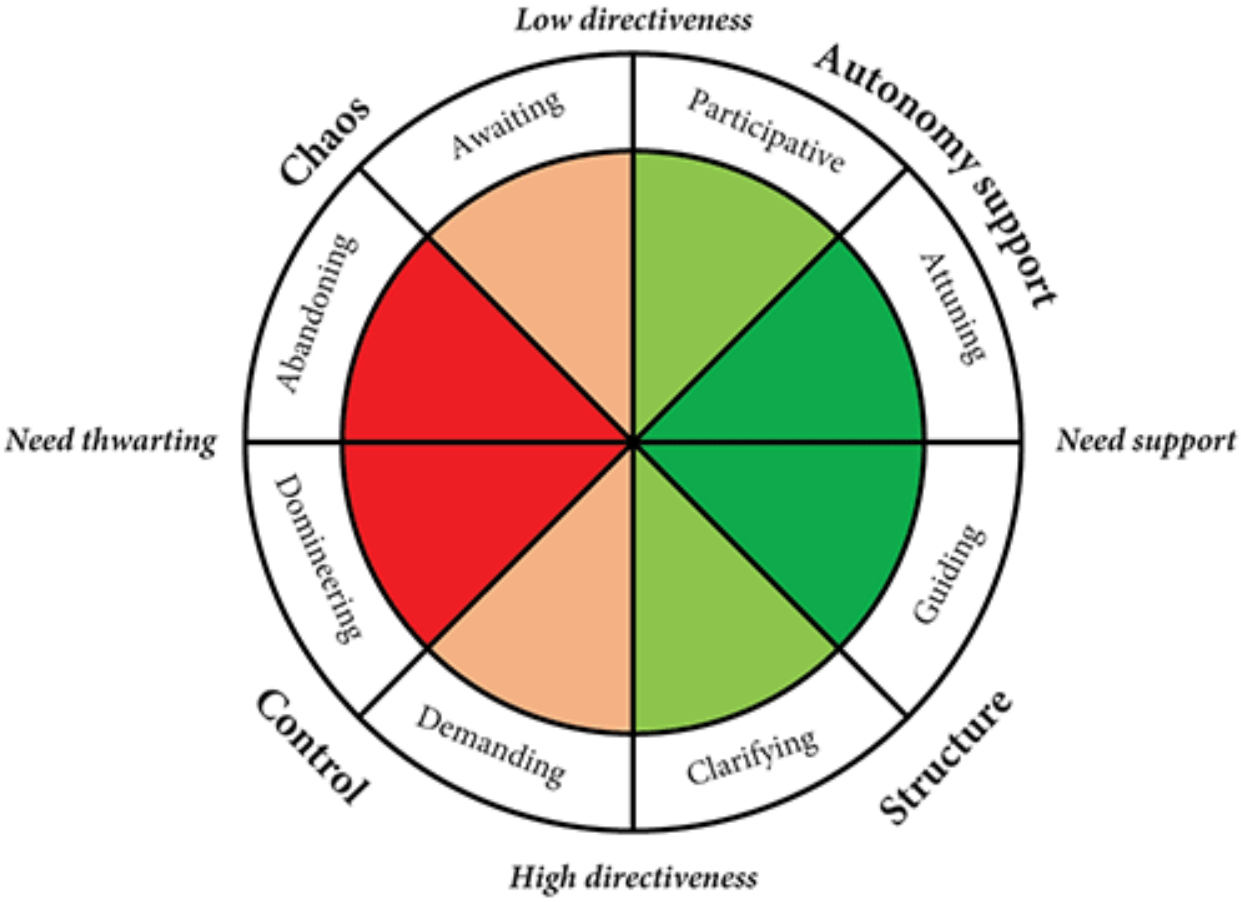

Table 8.8.1 Description of the identified motivating approaches in the circumplex

Autonomy support	
Participative	A *participative* socializing agent engages in a dialogue and invites others to provide input and suggestions. In addition, where possible, the socializing agent offers (meaningful) choices in the type of activities others engage in and how others want to deal with (learning) activities, thereby optimally following their pace.
Attuning	An *attuning* socializing agent nurtures individuals' personal interests by trying to find ways to make the activities more interesting and enjoyable, accepting individuals' expressions of negative affect and trying to understand how others see things. The socializing agent provides explanatory and solid rationales such that others experience a sense of ownership with respect to introduced activities or guidelines.
Structure	
Guiding	A *guiding* socializing agent nurtures other individuals' progress by providing appropriate help and assistance as and when needed. The socializing agent goes through the steps that are necessary to complete a task, so that others can continue independently and, if necessary, can ask questions. Together with those being motivated the socializing agent constructively reflects on mistakes, so that they see for themselves what can be improved and how they can improve.
Clarifying	A *clarifying* socializing agent communicates expectations to others in a clear and transparent way. The socializing agent creates a sense of predictability by offering an overview of what individuals can expect, creating a timeline, or delineating the different steps involved towards an end goal. Socializing agents monitor individuals' progress in meeting the communicated expectations and following the guidelines for desirable behavior.
Control	
Demanding	A *demanding* socializing agent requires discipline from others by using powerful and commanding language to make clear what others have to do. The socializing agent points individuals on their duties, tolerates no participation or contradiction, and threatens with sanctions if others do not comply.
Domineering	A *domineering* socializing agent exerts power to others to make them comply with his/ her requests. The socializing agent suppresses others' opinion and perspective by inducing feelings of guilt and shame. While a demanding socializing agent tries to change students' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors into something more acceptable to the socializing agent, a domineering approach is characterized by a 'personal attack' on them.
Chaos	
Abandoning	An *abandoning* socializing agent gives up on others. The socializing agent allows individuals to just do their own thing, because eventually they have to learn to take responsibility for their own behavior. An abandoning socializing agent adopts a permissive attitude when clear action or guidelines are needed.
Awaiting	An *awaiting* socializing agent offers a laissez- faire learning climate where the initiative fully lies with the others. The socializing agent tends to wait to see how things evolve, doesn't plan too much and rather let things take their course.

Note: Adapted from Aelterman et al. (2019). Socializing agent can refer to teachers, coaches, parents, or managers, with the person being motivated being a student, athlete, child, or employee.