

— LEADING  
WITH ADHD.

# Coaching for Motivation in Adults with ADHD

Leveraging Self Determination Theory  
and the Interest-based Brain Model

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# Agenda

- What is Motivation?
- Self Determination Theory
- The ADHD Interest-Based Nervous System
- Coaching Application
- Coaching Practice
- Discussion

# Learning Objectives

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- Summarize Self Determination Theory (SDT) as it applies to motivation.
- Summarize the ADHD Interest-based Nervous System (AINS) for adults with ADHD as it applies to motivation.
- Apply SDT and AINS “levers” in coaching to enhance/develop motivation.
- Recognize coaching situations where using the SDT/AINS approach would be effective.
- Practice coaching for motivation using the SDT/AINS framework.

# What is Motivation?

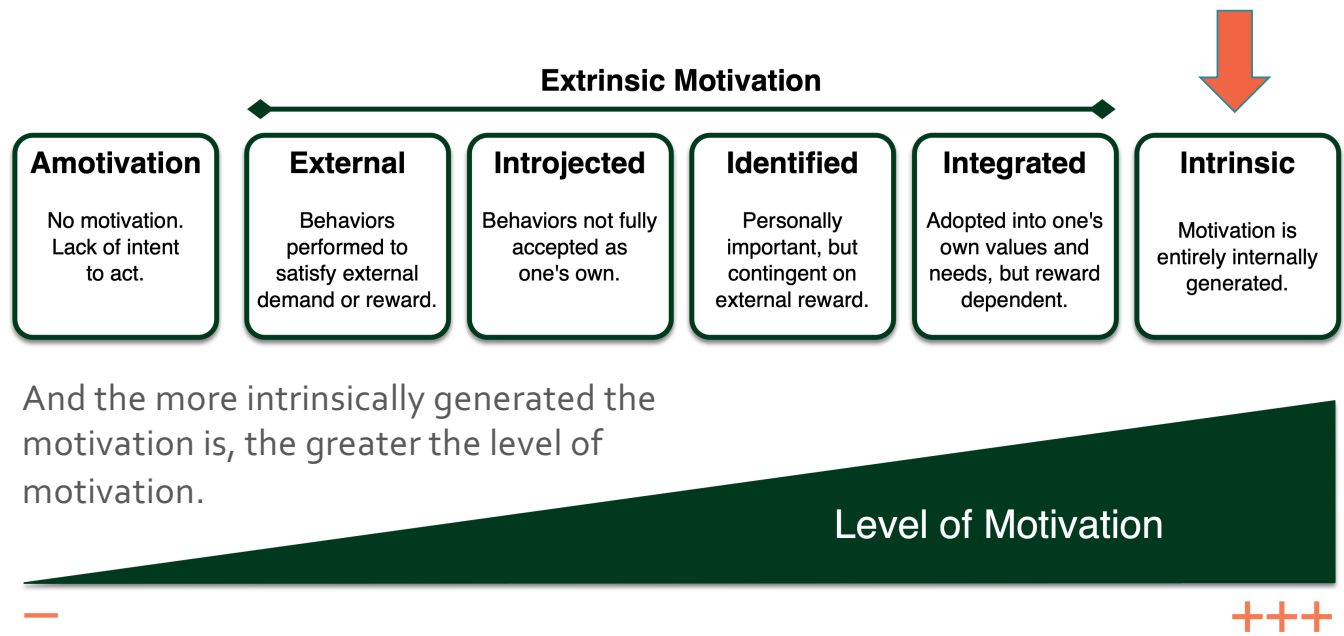
## Definitions:

- *A reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way.*
- *A desire or willingness to do something.*
- *Internal and external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested and committed to a job, role or subject, or to make an effort to attain a goal.*

# Self Determination Theory

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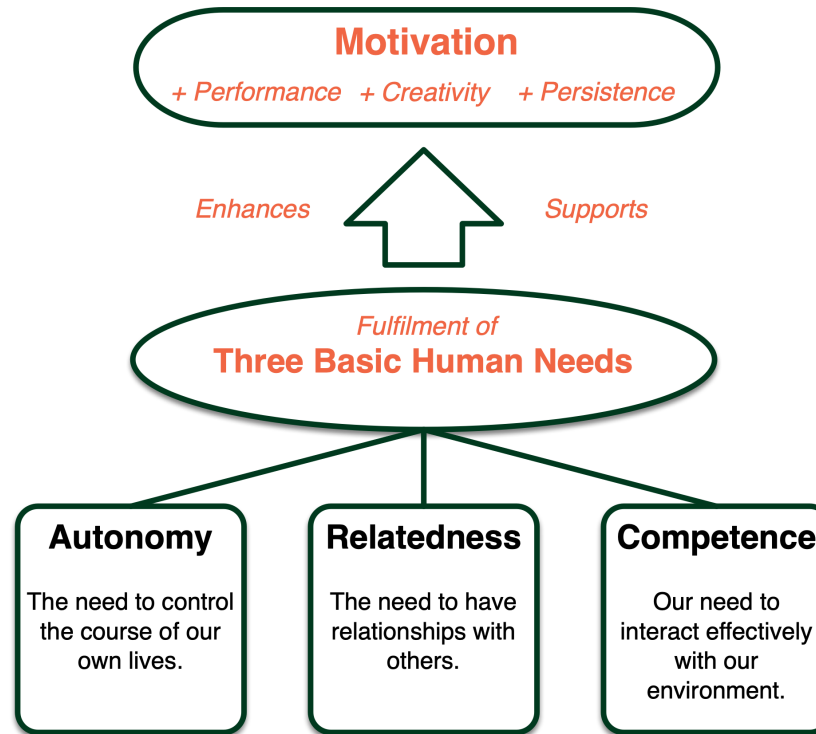
Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan) is a theory of motivation. It's about supporting our natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in effective and healthy ways.



Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227-268.

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SDT argues that supporting the individual's experience of *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* fosters the highest forms of motivation.



Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227-268.

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# Self Determination Theory

# Self Determination Theory

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SDT also says that for a high level of intrinsic motivation two psychological needs have to be fulfilled:

- Competence - so the activity results in feelings of self-development and efficacy.
- Autonomy – so the performance of the chosen activity was self-initiated or self-determined.

**ADHD Meta Challenge:** If individuals with ADHD struggle to perform the activity or believe they won't succeed, they will likely not feel competent. And if they fear failure because of this perceived competence deficit, they will be less likely to autonomously choose to engage in the activity.



# The ADHD Interest Based Nervous System

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According to Dr William Dodson, people with an ADHD style nervous system are always able to do anything if the person can get in the “zone” through...

- Interest
- Challenge
- Novelty/Creativity
- Passion
- ... or Urgency(!)

But they are not able to even start a task based on importance, rewards, or consequences [*unless or until it becomes urgent?*]

Dodson, William W. (2006) Real-World Office Management of ADHD in Adults. *Psychiatric Times* 23(13).

Dodson, William W. (2017) Webinar: How ADHD Shapes Your Perceptions, Emotions & Motivation. *ADDitude Magazine*.  
<https://www.additudemag.com/webinar/adhd-symptoms-emotions-motivation/>

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# The ADHD Interest Based Nervous System

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## Urgency

As we all know, people with ADHD can become “urgency junkies,” becoming over-reliant on urgency as a primary source of motivation.

Individuals may be successful in their reliance on urgency, but performance becomes inconsistent over time and across domains.

Reliance on urgency becomes more problematic when others depend on the individual’s performance – e.g. in family and in organizational/leadership roles.



Urgent

# The ADHD Interest Based Nervous System

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## Positive Emotional Support

Dodson also discusses the value of a “cheerleader” (friend, family member, coach, etc.) who lends positive emotional support.

Speaks to the value of supporting and fostering positive emotions – see Fredrickson’s Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions

- Negative emotions lead to specific action tendencies and have a narrowing or focusing effect – we want to get rid of what is causing that emotion.
- Positive emotions have been proven to have both a broadening and building, discarding automatic responses and looking for creative, flexible and unpredictable new ways of thinking and acting.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226.

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# Coaching Application

## Coaching Opportunity:

To help clients generate motivation to engage in a task by...

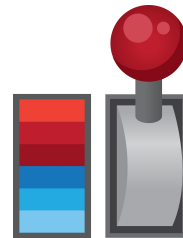
- Re-framing their situation to illuminate possibilities that may boost their feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness...
- Increasing their interest in the task (through interest, novelty/creativity, challenge, or passion – not urgency!)
- Providing positive emotional support that helps them succeed in the activity in such a way that it boosts their confidence and unlocks a virtuous cycle.



# Coaching Application

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## Pulling Levers



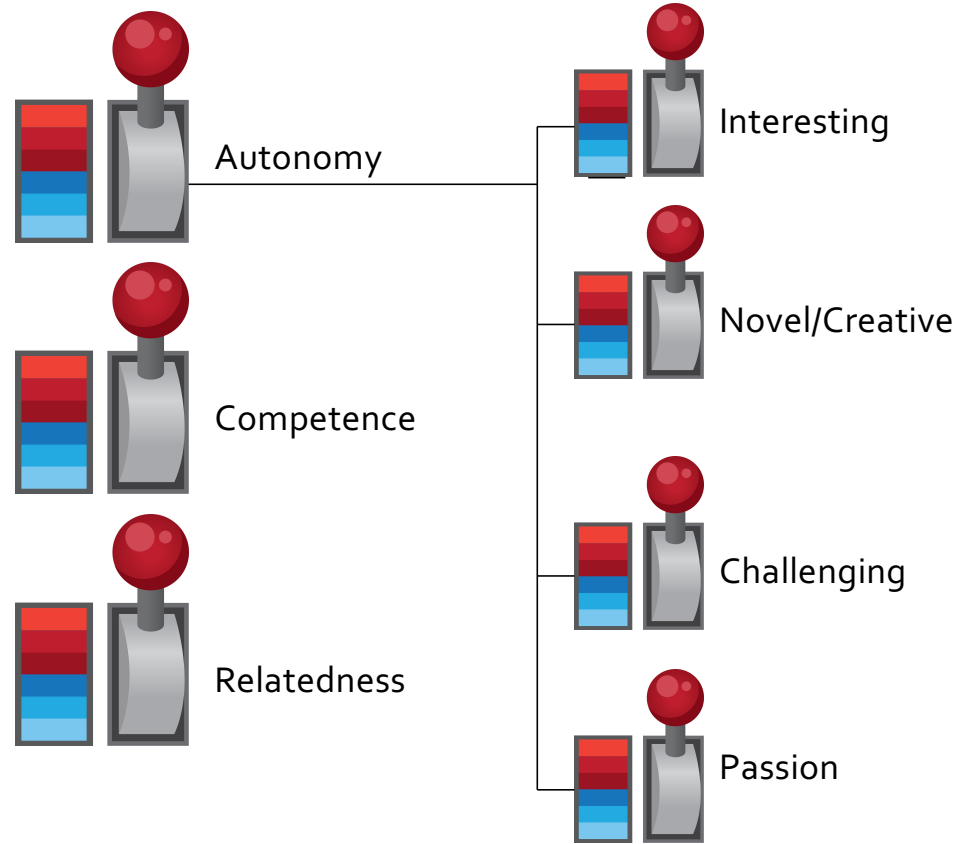
Think of each of the elements of Self Determination Theory and the ADHD Interest-Based Nervous System we've discussed as possible "levers" your clients can pull to increase their level of intrinsic motivation, without resorting to URGENT.

Not all of these dimensions need to be explored, especially in one session.

Use your best judgment based on what you know (or learn) about your client's ADHD and motivational profile.

Consider using "psycho-education" to teach your client about these models as you engage with them.

# Coaching Application



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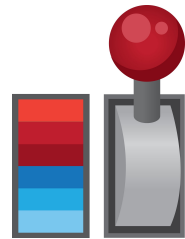
# Coaching Application

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### Autonomy

Autonomy is key – take some time to explore your client's perception of their autonomy.

- Why do they need to do this thing?
- Do they feel capable? And they they have the self belief/self efficacy in their ability to do it? Is this impacting their sense of autonomy (actually wanting to do it?)



Autonomy

The need to control the course of our own lives.

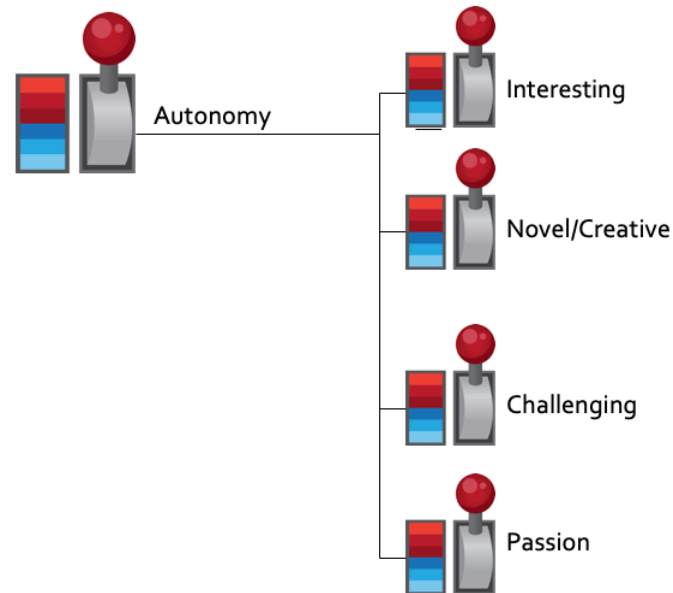


I believe ADHD individuals over-focus on the need to do the thing *just because* they struggle with it.

- What agency do they have? Can they choose to not do the thing? Can it be delegated or outsourced?
- What might they do to make the task/project their own?
- Be their cheerleader re: autonomy!

# Coaching Application

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### Autonomy

- Explore how your client values the AINS dimensions – how do they impact your client’s sense of motivation? Do they tend to prefer one more than others?
- If so, inquire about how they might make the task more (interesting, creative, challenging...) for themselves.
- Explore ways your client might leverage the AINS dimension(s) to feel more autonomous and motivated.
- Help them build their sense of agency to do so.

# Coaching Application

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Our need to  
interact effectively  
with our  
environment.

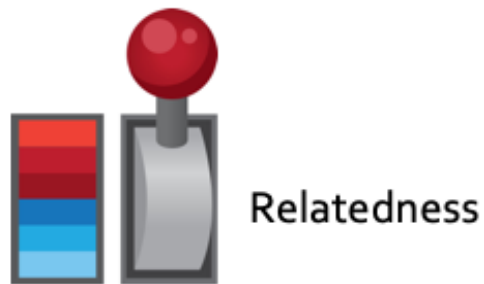
### Competence

- Explore your client's sense of their ability to do the task.
- Do they believe they have the necessary knowledge and skills? If not, how might they access them?
- To what degree is their sense of competence eroded by self-doubt associated with their ADHD. How might you help them access effective strategies to overcome the relevant ADHD challenges?



# Coaching Application

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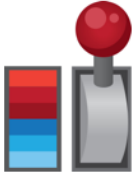


Relatedness

The need to have relationships with others.

### Relatedness

- Explore to what degree your client might benefit from support from others in completing their task.
- Could they benefit from collaboration with others to maximize their strengths and productivity? Might they be too focused on a perceived need to do the task by themselves?
- How might a “body double” alone be helpful in boosting their motivation?





What questions might you ask your client?

| SDT Dimension   | Possible Coaching Questions |
|---|-----------------------------|
|  Autonomy      |                             |
|  Competence    |                             |
|  Relatedness |                             |

# Coaching Practice

# Coaching Practice

What questions might you ask your client?

| AINS Dimension   | Possible Coaching Questions |
|--|-----------------------------|
|  Interesting    |                             |
|  Novel/Creative |                             |
|  Challenging   |                             |
|  Passion      |                             |

# Coaching Practice

- In pairs, practice coaching each other using this model  
– take turns!

# Questions and Discussion

- What did you learn or discover in your practice?
- What questions do you have?

## Resources

### Self Determination Theory:

- [Center for Self Determination Theory](#)
- [PositivePsychology.com](#)
- [GoStrengths.com](#)

### The Interest-Based Nervous System

- [Dodson, William W. 3 Defining Features of ADHD That Everyone Overlooks \(2018\) ADDitude Magazine.](#)
- [Dodson, William W. \(2006\) Real-World Office Management of ADHD in Adults. Psychiatric Times 23\(13\).](#)
- [Dodson, William W. \(2017\) Webinar: How ADHD Shapes Your Perceptions, Emotions & Motivation. ADDitude Magazine.](#)

Thank You!



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